



Bell Ringer

Volume 56, No 8 December 2022
Clear Lake, South Dakota 57226

CAPITAL CREDITS PAYOUT

- 5.1 Million Dollars -

Your ITC Board of Directors is excited to announce a capital credits payout in December for the fourth year in a row! ITC will payout the remainder of the years 2007 and 2008, along with 15% of 2018. This payout equals more than 5.1 million dollars being paid out to our Coop members this year, making it the largest payout in ITC history. Checks will be mailed early in December. Members with a distribution of \$100 or less will receive a credit on their bill.

It's great to be an Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative member! Capital credits are a huge benefit to being a member of a Coop. As a coop member, most of our profits get passed back to you through capital credits. In August, your bill included an allocation statement from 2021. This year, your allocation statement reflected that more than 60% of what you paid for applicable services was allocated back to you. In the past 15 years, ITC has paid back its members 22 million dollars.

Because you subscribe to products and services provided by your local Cooperative, ITC can provide you with these capital credits payouts. When you support your Coop, you also help to build and maintain quality telecommunications for your communities. Your support also makes it possible for ITC to offer new products and services at an affordable rate. Together we can make a difference.

ITC is interested to know how you spend your capital credits payout. Please scan the QR code below with your phone's camera and let us know how you spend it - presents, groceries, bills, fun, etc. We would like to hear from you! If you submit a form you will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 bill credit.

As always, thank you for supporting ITC!



Julie Flanagan, Heather Landmark, and Amy Bjerke, all from the Accounting Department, working to mail the Capital Credits.

*Merry Christmas
from ITC!*

UPDATE YOUR ROUTER

By Michael Martinell, Network Broadband Technician

Not a month goes by without some new router exploit. The website routersecurity.org, which helps track these kinds of things, shows recent exploits in Asus, Netgear, Cisco, Linksys, D-Link, TP-Link, and many other popular brands of routers. The issues include outdated operating systems, old versions of software, and hardcoded credentials that can be used from anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, many users who own their routers don't keep them up-to-date.

While it is true that some newer router models automatically update themselves, many times, that feature must be enabled. Older routers may not have that feature at all, and sadly many popular routers have been abandoned by their creators without any security patches.

What is the danger?

In the past, if criminals broke into your router, they used it to host malicious websites. While this might still be the case, these days, hacked routers are used by criminals to spy on network traffic, hack your DNS settings and steal your passwords, and use them to mine cryptocurrency. Another popular tactic is to present you with a phony technical support page with a fake phone number.

What can ITC do?

If you want to avoid the hassle of updating your router and managing your connections, consider leasing a router from ITC. One major advantage of our Blast Wi-Fi routers is that we work to keep them as up-to-date and secure as possible. We take care of things like firmware updates and other security measures. They also feature carrier-grade reliability to create an optimal Wi-Fi experience. You can be assured that your router is as secure as it can be.

The ITC Blast Wi-Fi package options include an app enabling advanced parental controls and network security. The app will also let you scan your network, check your bandwidth, create guest networks, and set your Internet up the way you want it. Our optional intelligent mesh units help ensure Internet coverage inside your home and may extend your wireless to your patio or other outdoor areas.

What can you do?

If you do not have an ITC router, ensure your router's firmware and other software are up to date. How to do this will vary depending on your router brand. To determine the steps necessary for your device, refer to the documents that came with your router. If you don't have them any longer, they should be available from the manufacturer's website. One thing to remember is that the update process needs to run without losing power. You should also check to see if your router supports automatic updates. If it does, you should turn it on to automatically get the security fixes that keep the bad guys out.

VIDEO CHATTING

By Holly Stormo, Marketing Communications Specialist

The holidays are an important time to connect with family and friends. Sometimes you get to see them in person, but if not, here are a few ways to video chat with them.

Zoom

Zoom is an app perfect for chatting with many family members or friends simultaneously. You can use Zoom with a computer, tablet, or phone. It is used often for work webinars and meetings because you can send invites and can share your screen. You can sign up for a free version of Zoom that allows you to chat for 40 minutes at a time. Go to <https://zoom.us/> to sign up and begin chatting with family and friends.

FaceTime

FaceTime is a video chatting app that is made by Apple. Primarily Apple devices use this to video chat from phone to phone, tablet, or computer. More recently, Android users can use FaceTime if the Apple user sends them a link. To do this, the Apple user must open FaceTime and tap on Create Link. Then you can share that link through text or email. FaceTime is also a free app available through the Apple App Store. Google Duo is the Android version of FaceTime.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a messaging and video chatting app used by 180 countries internationally. You can use this app to message, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, and your location. WhatsApp messages go over the Internet instead of SMS texting, making it easier to use Internationally.

With many options for video chatting, ITC hopes you can enjoy seeing the faces of your loved ones this season.

POWER OUTAGES

If you have a power outage, your ITC telephone service will continue to work with your wired (not cordless) telephone using battery power. This battery power comes from the ITC installed power supply at your home. Voice service on a backup battery is expected to last at least eight hours on standby power. The backup battery should give you at least six hours of talk time. If you feel that is not enough time, consider extending your standby power up to 24 hours by purchasing additional eight-hour batteries from our company. If you have any questions, please contact our office at 1.800.417.8667.



**Have a very Merry
Christmas and a Happy
New Year!**

*ITC will be closed on
December 26 and January 2.*