

How Technology is Helping Seniors Live Independently

Given the comforting familiarity and fond memories of home, it's no surprise that home is where many seniors prefer to spend their golden years. Yet declines in physical abilities or cognitive function can make living alone an unsafe option. Thankfully, new technology is enabling more seniors to stay in their homes and age in place.



A growing number of affordable devices are now on the market to help seniors enjoy greater independence and give their families more peace of mind. They include:

- **Smart Detection Devices** – There are smart stove alarms to alert older adults to potentially dangerous situations in the kitchen and smart bath monitors to detect potential overflow issues and shut off water before the bathtub overfills.
- **Smart Medication Reminders** – Since seniors often take multiple medications, making sure the correct medication is taken at the correct time is a worrisome issue for many families. To address it, smart medication pillboxes offer audible or visual cues to prompt users to take their meds and can also send remote alerts to caregivers.
- **Smart Doorbells** – By providing a video picture of visitors, these devices help older adults decide whether or not to answer the door to a stranger.
- **Smart Home Security Systems** – These can be programmed to automatically lock doors, arm security systems, and alert homeowners and caregivers remotely if issues arise.

In addition, personal emergency response systems (PERS) provide seniors with a personal help button that's worn around the neck or wrist. Even in cases where an individual is unable to push the button, these devices are designed to sense a fall and connect automatically to a response center. There are also mobile PERS devices with GPS satellite tracking ability to alert the family of a senior's location. Other assistive devices include phones with large buttons that are easy for stiff fingers to use, and curtains or blinds that can be operated with remote controls.

Smart devices which help seniors age in place add to the demands of a home's internet connection. Contact Huxley Communications for more information on speeds and prices of our internet plans.

HUXLEY HAPPENINGS

Monday, May 29

Office closed for Memorial Day

Friday-Saturday, June 9-10

Cambridge Firemen Days

Tuesday, July 4

Slater 4th of July Celebration

Office closed for Independence Day



CONTACT INFORMATION

Huxley Communications

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huxtel@huxcomm.net

Free Internet Tech Support

515-597-HELP (4357) • Available 24/7

Report an Outage

515-597-2281

Call Before You Dig

Iowa One Call • 800-292-8989

Gary Clark

General Manager

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SPRING 2017



The Downsides to Cutting the Cable Cord

Despite the streaming service options now available, the vast majority of Americans still have cable TV service. What's more, some who have tried cutting the cord have been disappointed in the experience and returned to cable TV.

What are the downsides of cutting the cable cord? Here are the major ones:

- **Not all programming is available on streaming.** Some of your favorite shows or channels may be missing if you rely entirely on streaming services. This is particularly true for highly popular programs from premium channels.
- **You will probably need to pay for multiple streaming services.** For example, to get something even close to the programming you want, you may have to subscribe to three or four services. In addition to the costs involved, this also means the hassle of dealing with multiple companies.
- **You often have to wait to watch a program.** Some streaming services must wait until a television show has completed its season's run before it can have a title for streaming, meaning it might be a year before you can watch. Other services may delay the availability of a program anywhere from one day to a full week after it airs on traditional TV.

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What to Expect During a Power Outage with FTTH Service

Fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) service works differently than traditional copper-pair telephone service. With traditional telephone service, a very small amount of electrical current was carried over a copper circuit to power the telephone in your home. Since the new FTTH signal is entirely optical and can carry no appreciable power, the electronics attached to your home must be locally powered.

What this means in practically every case is that a battery backup unit has been installed inside your home. This unit is plugged into 110V AC commercial power and has a set of low power leads that feed the electronics outside. It's designed to provide approximately eight hours of backup telephone service during a commercial power outage. To keep the battery in optimum condition, it's important that the battery backup unit be plugged into an outlet that is always live (does not turn off with a switch). To verify your battery backup unit is plugged in and charging, you should see a green 'AC' light on the front of the unit.

To help ensure that we can provide telephone service during a power outage for the longest period possible, the electronics on the side of the house sense the presence of commercial power at your home or business. In the event of a power outage, they enter an economy mode and shut down all customer-facing data ports. For most subscribers, this means internet and television services are disrupted.

Normally in a power outage this is acceptable, since your televisions, computers, and wireless routers are no longer powered up and functioning; most people won't notice the disruption. Telephone service is provided throughout the outage, up to approximately eight hours.

There are a few things to keep in mind to ensure you have telephone service during power outages. First, feature phones (phones that require commercial power to operate) will no longer be functional due to the power outage. This includes practically all cordless phones on the market. The handset will still likely power up, but since the commercial power is out at the base unit, no calls will be passed. The best way to keep telephone service during an outage is to keep at least one plain old telephone in your home in a convenient location. Phones like this can be purchased at many retailers for a reasonable cost. It should just be a simple telephone with only a telephone cord. No commercial power cord should be present.

For those customers that have backup power at their homes or businesses, internet and television services can be maintained through the power outage. The only requirement is that the battery backup unit installed in your premise be plugged into an outlet served by the backup generator. In this scenario, the battery backup unit and fiber terminal are not even aware there is a power outage and continue to operate normally.

While this article covers most common scenarios, it might not cover all of them. If you have specific concerns not covered here, please feel free to call the business office at 515-597-2281. We'll be glad to discuss your specific scenario.

4 Reasons You Might Need to Buy a New Router

Routers are often the forgotten workhorses of the home network. Many people pay no attention to them unless there's a malfunction. That's unfortunate, since getting a new router can be an inexpensive and effective way to improve Wi-Fi range, get a stronger signal, and better handle the demands of all the users and devices in your household.

Here are some reasons to consider replacing your router:

- 1. You're experiencing frequent symptoms of an underpowered or overwhelmed router.** These include network-related congestion issues, like slow-loading web pages or stuttering video playback, that can't be chalked up to a slow broadband connection. Another sign is not being able to get a strong Wi-Fi signal everywhere in your home.
- 2. You've had the router for several years.** Nothing lasts forever, including routers. The latest router models support the 802.11ac wireless standard, which can effectively handle 20 or more devices. By contrast, the 802.11g standard — introduced in 2003 — was designed to handle just two or three. One of the best ways to make sure your home's Wi-Fi network is as fast and reliable as possible is to buy a new router that supports 802.11ac.

- 3. You're not getting the internet speeds you expect from your plan.** Some older routers have a speed cap limiting the maximum internet speed possible, which means your outdated router may be preventing you from receiving the full speed of your internet plan.



- 4. You want specialty features.** Newer routers typically come with specialty features that were either missing from older models or were there but too difficult to access. For example, these features make it easy to set up Quality of Service rules (so that certain devices and/or applications on your network get bandwidth preference to ensure smooth operation) as well as “bedtime” enforcement where certain devices can't access the internet during homework or bedtime hours.

In addition to considering a new router, you may also want to look into upgrading your internet connection. Call us at 515-597-2281 for details.

Highlights from the Huxley Communications Annual Meeting



Thank you to everyone who attended this year's Annual Meeting on March 23. Those in attendance received a financial update on the cooperative from General Manager Gary Clark and enjoyed a wonderful presentation by board president Scott DeTar. Congratulations to the newly elected board members: Brett Krogman, Lori McCasland, and Erin Thompson.

We also congratulate the door prize winners:

- **Rich and Bev Albaugh** – SmartTV
- **Brett Krogman** – Amazon Fire
- **Roger Greenough** – Amazon Echo Dot
- **Victor Neilson** – Portable Bluetooth Soundbar
- **Steve McClelland** – Bluetooth Earbuds
- **Jim Howk and Scott DeYoung** – Cordless Phones

We look forward to seeing you next year!

Lifeline Helps Make Phone Service More Affordable

Lifeline is a government benefit program that provides a discount on monthly phone service (wireline or wireless) for eligible low-income subscribers. This helps ensure they have a phone to find jobs, access health care services, connect with family and their children's schools, and call for help in an emergency.

The current Lifeline discount is set at \$9.25 per month. Federal rules prohibit eligible low-income subscribers from receiving more than one Lifeline service per household.

That is, eligible low-income subscribers may receive a Lifeline discount on either a wireline or a wireless service, but may not receive a Lifeline discount on both services at the same time. Additionally, only one Lifeline service may be obtained per household.

The Lifeline program is available to eligible low-income subscribers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands. You must be eligible to enroll. To participate in the program, subscribers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal Poverty Guidelines or participate in one of the following assistance programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Head Start (if income eligibility criteria are met)
- State assistance programs (if applicable)

To see if you are eligible, use the Lifeline Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool on the Universal Service Administrative website at www.lifelinesupport.org. You can also visit the Huxley Communications office for more information.



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- **Diehard sports fan may want to think twice.** That is particularly true for NFL fans that simply must watch the games in real time. To do that, you need access to local cable channels, since the NFL Game Rewind streaming service offers only games that have already been played.
- **You could run into problems if your internet service has data caps.** Streaming video, especially HD video, takes a large amount of data bandwidth. Some internet providers put monthly data caps on their services, and consumers that do a lot of streaming can end up exceeding these caps. This can result in reduced service quality levels, dropped streams, or even disconnection.

The bottom line is this: Research carefully and think about all the issues before making a change. You may decide that cable TV service is still the best choice for you.

A Big Tribute to Small Businesses

National Small Business Week is the first week in May. It's a great reminder to think about how much our local small businesses add to this community in terms of jobs, unique products, personal service, and much more. Huxley Communications encourages you to shop local, spend local, eat local, and enjoy local. If you own a small business, we congratulate you and wish you much success.

