

CLOSED FOR BUSINESS

MAY 29 | Memorial Day

JULY 4 | Independence Day

SEPT. 4 | Labor Day

NOV. 10 | Veterans Day

207 E Cedar Street,
Houston, MN 55943

BUSINESS HOURS:
Monday - Friday 8:00am - 4:30pm

LOBBY OPEN:
Mondays & Thursdays 8:00am - 4:30pm



MINNESOTA/IOWA ISSUE

CUSTOMER NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2023



GROWING OUR FIBER FOOTPRINT: AN UPDATE ON PROJECTS

The year has gotten off to a busy start when it comes to our fiber construction. The goal of AcenTek is to bring fiber to every community we serve. Due to the cost involved, we set a schedule annually that can accommodate both the personnel and financial pace available. This year is no exception with an ambitious list of projects to accomplish in each of the three states we serve.

The year began by finishing up our fiber project in Clermont, Iowa. Customers in the city limits had already been converted to fiber services, and by the end of January, another 300+ rural locations also became fiber-fed.

Meanwhile the work began in Fort Atkinson, Iowa. Everyone (customers and non-customers) was contacted to have home assessments done, which is the first step in our fiber process. Construction began in early May on the fiber build which will include 791 locations. Our tentative timeline is to have construction complete by mid-October. We plan to begin converting customers in Fort Atkinson to fiber services this fall.

Also in May, construction began in our Eitzen, Minnesota, exchange. The fiber build to our friends here includes 215 homes. The construction phase is expected to be complete in early August, with splicing and converting customers to follow.

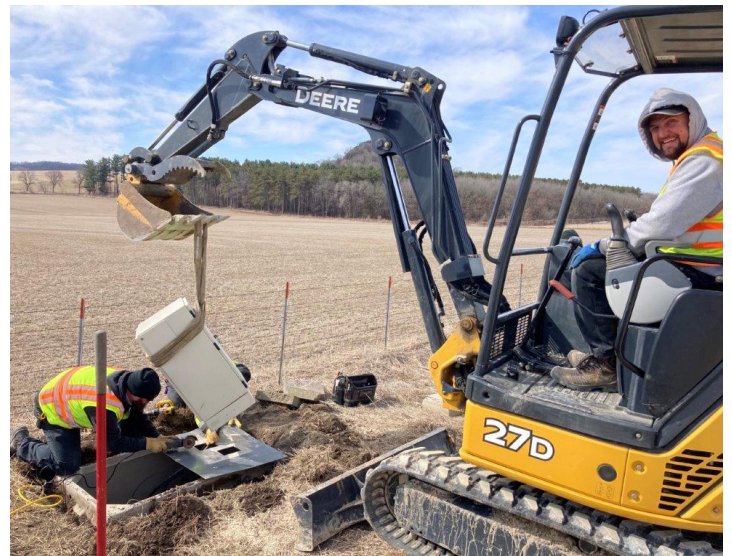
In August we plan to begin Phase 1 of our fiber project in Harpers Ferry, Iowa. The fiber build in Harpers will include 247 homes. The construction is expected to begin in late August, with the hope of completing the project by December. Customers in this phase of our Harpers Ferry build could begin being hooked up to fiber services before the end of the year. Phase 2 of this fiber build will begin in 2024.

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PICTURES: Our fiber project begins in Fort Atkinson. With the help of our partners, Cooperative Network Services (CNS) and West Union Trenching, the work began in town in early May.



RESPONDING QUICKLY: HARD AT WORK

In March, one of our roadside cabinets in rural New Albin was damaged when it was hit by a vehicle. A passerby noticed the damaged cabinet, completely knocked off its base, and notified us.

Our team promptly responded to replace the cabinet. Due to the size of the encasing, a backhoe had to be used to help place the new cabinet. Splicers, combination technicians and construction inspectors were on site, and the repair was complete in about three hours.

AcenTek urges you to be mindful of equipment along the roadways in your community. These cabinets house the equipment that runs your AcenTek services. Damage to them is not only very costly, but also can result in outages for our customers. If you notice damage to this equipment, please notify AcenTek immediately.



Special thanks to Andy Otterness, Jeremy Leis, Jamie Johnston, Cory Wiebke, Tanner Iverson, Jason Vix and John Jore for the efficient work they did replacing this cabinet.

BEING SMART IN YOUR INBOX

It would be nice if every malicious email came with a warning label so you knew how to react to it. Sometimes, we click on something we shouldn't and end up having that mistake cost us. The AcenTek team has a few tips that will help you identify potentially harmful emails. Just being aware and knowing how to react is the best way to conquer human error.

Phishing emails are messages that appear to be from a reputable company but are really sent by hackers. These messages can easily trick you into sharing personal information, like passwords and credit card numbers. Often, these emails look like they are from a reputable organization causing people to think they are legit. Subject lines may contain a message about your account being compromised. The message may likely encourage your immediate response.



BE SKEPTICAL:

Think about who the sender is. Are you expecting an email like this? Is it really time to renew a subscription? Is this organization one you do business with?

How should you react to suspicious emails in your inbox?

LOOK! Keep your eyes open for red flags. Misspellings or grammatical errors are common in these emails. If the website you see when you hover over the link doesn't match what is typed in the email, you should be suspicious. Also look at the email sender. Often phishing attempts use some variation of the company name or website, with slight variances that people can easily overlook. These red flags are reasons for you to believe the email could be a phishing attempt. Never click links from an email you are suspicious of.

DON'T CLICK. SIMPLY DELETE.

If you think an email could be a phishing attempt, the first thing to do is nothing at all. Don't click any link. Don't reply and don't give any information. If you are unsure if the email is legitimate, call the organization directly to verify the message really came from them, and certainly don't use any contact information or phone numbers provided in the message.

POINT TO POINT SYSTEMS: HELPING FARMERS, SCHOOLS AND MORE

It seems the need for internet on your property just keeps growing. You've needed it at your home for awhile now, but what about those other buildings? AcenTek has been hearing from many customers lately regarding that. Our Point to Point System is the way that we can help.

A Point to Point System is essentially a way to share your internet to a second location on your property that does not have internet access. This network shares the connection wirelessly, extending internet to a second location. For example, if you have internet at your home and want internet in your barn, equipment can be installed to share that service from one location to the other. Point to Point Systems are becoming extremely popular, especially with farmers. Many are reaching out to AcenTek asking for the system to be installed so that they may have the capability to monitor their cattle or for use of their grain dryer. The ability to monitor their cattle located in multiple buildings minimizes the time and effort needed to physically go out and check on the livestock. This is especially helpful during the cold months and throughout the calving season. But farmers are not the only ones requesting a Point to Point System.

Last fall the La Crescent Schools contacted us searching for a way to have internet at their football field. AcenTek provided a Point to Point System to allow internet access to their press box and throughout the field. Athletic director, Eriah Hayes, explained the reasons why the Point to Point System was the solution they needed, stating, "Since Covid, people expect to be able to tune in to sporting events virtually. We needed this capability at our field.

After we got the ability to live-stream our games, I had grandparents and uncles contacting me, expressing their gratitude for being able to watch their loved one perform." Hayes commented that he was pleased with the work the AcenTek team did, expressing he was impressed by the timeline in which they were able to get the job done. Helping solve this issue for the school not only helped the spectators, but the athletes and coaches are also benefiting. Hayes mentioned Hudl, a tool used to manage teams by capturing video and analyzing the stats. Using Hudl is only possible because the La Crescent football field now has internet access. Since the Point to Point System was installed, the coaches have enjoyed being able to use Hudl to improve their teams.

Farms and athletic fields are not the only places where a Point to Point System is the solution to a problem. Recently, a local homeowner reached out to us explaining that they owned a cabin on their same property where friends and family would stay when they came to visit. There was not internet access at the cabin, and they were interested in learning what the options were to remedy that. A Point to Point System solved the problem. Now their visitors can enjoy internet access due to the shared connection.

These stories, along with so many more, are examples of instances where we were able to help our customers do what they do. If you are interested in a Point to Point System as a possible solution, contact AcenTek. We will have our team review your location and verify all the necessary requirements. Customers can pay to have us then install the equipment. We are pretty excited to be able to assist with that and are grateful for so many customers who trust AcenTek to provide the technology they need for their daily lives.



DID YOU KNOW?

You can easily rate AcenTek. We'd love to hear what you think.

Leave us a review on Facebook or on Google

FOLLOW ALONG.



Facebook/GoAcenTek



Twitter/GoAcenTek



FLAGS: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN?

Having someone come out and locate before your project begins is a very important step. Different colored flags will be placed to mark important lines that should not be disturbed during your project. Below is a color guide for what each color flag identifies.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● RED Electric utilities | ● ORANGE Communication lines |
| ○ WHITE Excavation | ● BLUE Water lines |
| ● PINK Temporary survey markings | ● PURPLE Undrinkable water lines |
| ● YELLOW Gaseous materials, like petroleum or steam | ● GREEN Sewer lines |



FASTER SPEEDS AND MORE OPTIONS INTERNET THAT IS FUTURE PROOF

In early April, we made some big changes to our internet offerings. Why did we do that? The answer is simple. You.

Your life continually demands more from your internet. Your finances, your education, your entertainment and perhaps even your job require you to have reliable internet. We know your life is full, and we want to help you keep up. As your internet provider, we continually reevaluate what we offer, making sure that our services align with your needs. We challenge ourselves to give you more than our competitors do, and to provide better customer care than any other company. More speed. More options. Better price. Better service. That is the motivation behind adding more internet packages and providing faster speeds.

This spring, we upgraded existing fiber internet customers to faster speeds, while keeping the price the same. Customers on the 200Mbps fiber internet package were upgraded to 500Mbps. Customers who were on our 1 Gig package only had 200Mbps upload speeds. They were switched to 1 Gig upload speed, again, with no change to their price.

In addition, we added a middle tier to our fiber internet offerings. If 500Mbps isn't enough, but your household doesn't need 1 Gig, you can now select our Optimum package. This offers 750Mbps download and upload speeds.

Providing you with the best options at an affordable price is our job. We will continue to review what you need to keep up with the pace of life. Visit AcenTek.net to learn more.



CONGRATULATIONS 2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

We were excited to award 18 high school seniors with \$1,000 scholarships this spring. These deserving recipients are graduating seniors who have been accepted to a tech school, college or university and have AcenTek phone or broadband service in Minnesota, Iowa, or Michigan. Over the past 22 years, AcenTek has given out \$423,000 to graduates in the communities we serve. Congratulations to this year's scholarship winners!

MINNESOTA:

- **Kiersten Bakalars** La Crescent High School
- **Olivia Beckman** Houston High School
- **Isabelle Ekstrom** Veritas Scholars Academy
- **Erin Fortsch** La Crescent High School
- **Lexie Hoscheit** Caledonia High School
- **Chason Mierau** Rushford-Peterson High School
- **Miranda Schroeder** Caledonia High School
- **Jane Thompson** Houston High School
- **Sydney Thompson** Houston High School
- **Sydney Torgerson** Houston High School

IOWA:

- **Alaina Gebel** Waukon High School
- **Jacqlyn Schmitt** Turkey Valley High School
- **Alexis Steffens** North Fayette Valley High School
- **Grace Stegen** Waukon High School
- **Billie Wagner** South Winneshiek High School
- **Jaylyn Walleser** Kee High School

MICHIGAN:

- **Jackson Kulawiak** Buckley High School
- **Anya Scott** Black River High School

ANNUAL MEETING IN REVIEW

On April 18th, AcenTek held the 73rd Annual Meeting of the Members online. Congratulations to Brad Hoiness, our new board member. Brad will represent Fillmore County. Congratulations also to incumbents, Connie Edwards (Minnesota area, served by the Association) and Bruce Lehmann (Iowa area, served by the Association) on their re-election. Special thanks to Bluff Country Financial Services for securely handling the ballots and tallying the results again this year.

We want to thank every member who took time to vote in this year's election. We had an impressive 1,499 ballots submitted, about 8 times as many as our in-person meetings yielded. The online venue continues to prove positive, as we see not only an increase in ballots cast, but also in attendance. This year we had 452 people watch the online meeting. This is more than double what our in-person meetings in Houston had for attendance. Thank you to all our loyal members who attended this year.

Our annual meeting has always been the ideal time to show our gratitude to our members. Again, this year we rewarded all members who attended the meeting with a \$10 credit on their AcenTek account. In addition, ten names were randomly chosen from all who attended the meeting. Those ten winners were awarded a gift to the merchant of their choice. Ten more names were chosen from those who mailed in their ballot, voting for the Board of Directors. Those ten winners were also awarded gift cards to the merchant of choice. Congratulations to all 20 of the winners! We appreciate our members and are grateful for your participation in this year's meeting and election process.



Congratulations Winners!

\$50 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Marilyn Bayer (Houston, MN) – Bauer's Market
- ♦ Paul & Carolyn Cripps (Houston, MN) – Quillins
- ♦ Brad & Danielle Gorder (Rushford, MN) - Kwik Trip
- ♦ Floyd Hackman (Fort Atkinson, IA) - Kwik Trip
- ♦ Myles Kupka (Fort Atkinson, IA) – Kwik Trip
- ♦ Dianne Morrison (La Crescent, MN) – Quillins
- ♦ Jack O'Donnell (Rushford, MN) – Rushford Foods
- ♦ Lillian Schmieden (Waterville, IA) – Kwik Trip
- ♦ Ellen Whalen Living Trust (Harmony, MN) - Target
- ♦ David Winskey (La Crescent, MN) – Kwik Trip

\$100 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Brady Dahl (Rushford, MN) – Rushford Foods
- ♦ Mark Kerrigan (La Crescent, MN) – Kwik Trip
- ♦ Ann Klees (Waterville, IA) - Walmart
- ♦ Jeff & Theresa Krueger (La Crescent, MN) – Kwik Trip
- ♦ Leah Misch (La Crescent, MN) – Kwik Trip

\$250 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Marilyn Frauenkron Bayer (Houston, MN) – Kwik Trip
- ♦ Elizabeth Becker (Hokah, MN) – Quillins
- ♦ Albert Reider (La Crescent, MN) - Kwik Trip

\$500 Gift Card Winners:

- ♦ Elsie Helke (Brownsville, MN) - Quillins
- ♦ Lois Rasmussen (Rushford, MN) - Walmart

CONGRATULATIONS!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS



**BRAD
HOINESS**

SERVING
FILLMORE
COUNTY



**CONNIE
EDWARDS**

DIRECTOR
AT LARGE,
MINNESOTA
AREA



**BRUCE
LEHMANN**

PORTION OF
IOWA SERVED
BY THE
ASSOCIATION



PICTURED: Mike Robinson, Combination Technician, presenting Jon Johnson, Chief at the New Albin Fire Department, with donation.



PICTURED: Andy Otterness, Combination Technician, presenting Ronald Franzen, Chief of the Fort Atkinson Fire Department, with donation.

SUPPORTING AREA VOLUNTEERS

Part of our mission at AcenTek is to show support for the communities we serve. Beyond the company's position on this, there is also proof that this desire exists within the members of our team.

Each quarter our office staff has the option of paying to dress casually to work. Using a hybrid work model, our staff may only be in the office a couple of days per week, yet they still donate. Our staff knows that those dollars are going to a good cause. The collected funds from employees are then matched by the Board of Directors. We rotate through a long list of non-profits that are in the areas we serve. This spring our team made donations to six Iowa volunteer fire departments. Fire departments in Clermont, Fort Atkinson, Harpers Ferry, New Albin, Ossian and Waterville each received a \$600 donation from AcenTek.

Some members from our team had the opportunity to stop by and visit a couple of the fire departments we donated to. While the firemen we spoke to were very appreciative of our donation, we also had gratitude to express. We are so grateful for the people who step up and volunteer to be part of their town's fire department. We hope we'll never need them but are very thankful they are there if we do.

Small communities have heart. That was made clear to us (again) as we spoke to the firemen. We heard repeatedly about the fireman who had served for years and years. We also heard the exciting stories about some area departments who are joining their crew. Getting involved and serving your community was a theme at every firehouse we visited with. Thank you, volunteers, for the important work you do. AcenTek is honored to support you.

KEEPING YOU SAFE ON YOUR FAVORITE SITES

Over time, you have become a regular online shopper. You appreciate the convenience, this offers, which saves you both time and travel. You also love social media, which gives you the freedom to keep up with friends and family who you rarely see. Online activity is a daily event for you, but you are becoming more and more concerned about keeping your online accounts safe. If this sounds familiar, you are not alone.

Did you know that popular web sites offer another layer of protection to keep your information safe and all you need to do is turn it on? Two-step verification (also referred to as multi-factor verification) is available and simply requires you to enter a rotating code as a second step when logging in. This is like having a second lock on your account. In order for someone to gain access to your information, they must access both your password and the rotating code. This will take more time and effort and, often, is enough to deter a bad actor into giving up.

Whenever you create an account and 2-factor authentication or verification is offered, consider turning it on. If you have existing online accounts and you have not activated 2-step verification, consider visiting your account settings and enable this extra layer of protection. Follow the steps on screen to complete the process. You will be asked to download an authenticator app such as Google or Microsoft Authenticator -- if you don't already have one. These apps can be found in your device's approved app store.

For example, **AMAZON** is a retailer who offers 2-step verification. All you must do is turn it on.

Here's how:

1. Go into your account and select **Login and Security**.
2. You will see **Two-Step Verification Settings** listed. Click the **Edit** button.
3. Click **Get Started**. On-screen instructions will then guide you through the process.

**Complete directions are also available on their site to assist you.*



FACEBOOK is another popular site that offers the option for a second layer of security. Just like Amazon, 2-Factor authentication is turned off by default so you will need to turn this on in your settings. Using your computer, follow these steps:

1. Go into your **Settings and Privacy**.
2. Click **Settings**.
3. Choose **Security and Login**.
4. Find **"Two-Factor Authentication"**, then click the **"Edit"** button. Follow the listed instructions.





REFER A FRIEND

to AcenTek and you both earn a \$50 credit on your account when they become our customer.

Visit ACENTEK.NET to learn more

HIGH WATERS, ACENTEK REACTS

Pictured here is a flooded AcenTek cabinet located south of Harpers Ferry, Iowa, taken at the end of April. With the crest of the Mississippi River forecasted to rise to a level that would impact our equipment, technician Mark VanderKolk and Network Operations Specialist, Aaron Horstman, responded to the site and pulled the batteries. This was a preventative measure to make sure that as the river rose, our customers' services still functioned properly. Services to our customers in this area were unaffected.



PASSWORD 101: BEST PRACTICES

Think of passwords as a lock to your door. Just as with your home or vehicle, behind that door are all sorts of valuable items. Don't forget to lock up! Bank accounts, personal data, online account information and so much more could be taken from you. For a lock (password) that can't be picked, follow these valuable tips as your guide.



LONG AND STRONG –

The longer, the stronger; at least 12 characters.

Think of phrases instead of words and avoid the use of common words such as “password” or “iloveyou”.

Remember, the longer the phrase, the stronger your password.

Also use a combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers and special characters to help strengthen your passwords.

DO NOT RECYCLE –

Just like a key, you need a unique one to protect each place.

You cannot use your front door key for your vehicle, right?

And just imagine if that were possible!

If you lost that single unique key, you would only have to worry about someone gaining access to that one single place.

The same concept applies to passwords.

Don't reuse the same one.

If you do, you risk someone accessing multiple accounts where that same password would work.

MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION IS A MUST –

You want to log in quickly, but you also want your information protected. Taking a few seconds to log in is worth it because multi-factor authentication adds a second layer of security on your account. A second step is required after entering in your password. It involves entering something you *have* (rotating code) with something you *know* (password) in order to log in. This second step can be completed using a variety of methods: a scan of your fingerprint, retina, or face, or a passcode sent to you via email (or an app) that you must enter. Having multi-factor authentication enabled is like locking your door and activating a burglar alarm. Someone trying to break in will have to use both pieces of information to gain access. This will take more time and effort for the scammer and often is enough to deter them from trying further. Whenever you create an account and multi-factor authentication is offered, you should use it to increase the security of accessing your information. Many popular sites and applications offer this option, but it is turned off by default.

To turn it on, simply go to your Settings, Privacy or Security.

Look for Multi-Factor or 2 Factor Authentication.

Most sites will ask you to download an authenticator app such as Google or Microsoft Authenticator which can be found in your device's approved app store.



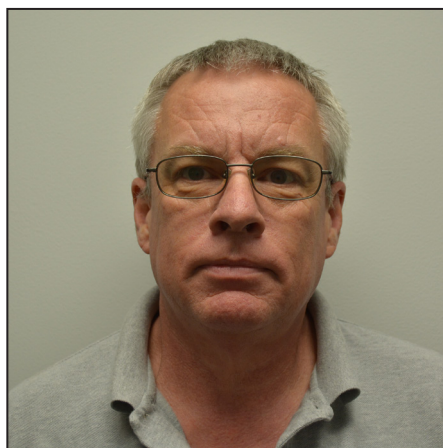
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CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT



TERRY WHITE

COMBINATION TECHNICIAN

After 15 years, Terry retired from our Houston office. Terry was hired in 2008 as an installer. In 2010, he became a Combination Technician, a role he kept until earlier this year when he retired. We appreciate the dedication Terry has shown to our company and to our customers over the years. Best wishes on your retirement, Terry!

WELCOME ABOARD!



**TONY
WHITE**

NETWORK
OPERATIONS
SPECIALIST