

January 2021 New Directory Listings:

Highmore

Willow Creek Steakhouse 852-2889



**Call 511
BEFORE
Traveling!**

Along with winter comes the ever-dreaded travel worries. Before you travel, remember to call 511. This toll-free number, provided by the South Dakota Department of Transportation and the South Dakota Highway Patrol, offers up-to-the-minute information about weather and road conditions.

By dialing 511 on your land-based or cellular phone, you can receive location-specific road and weather information for any Interstate, US or State highway in South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota.

Travelers should not confuse 511 with 911, the nationwide emergency response number. 911 should be called for any situation requiring police, fire department, ambulance or other emergency services. 911 is manned by trained public safety dispatchers throughout the state of South Dakota.

**HAPPY
Valentine's Day**

on Sunday, February 14th

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Venture Communications is an
equal opportunity provider and employer.

PO Box 157 ■ Highmore, SD 57345

605-852-2224 ■ venture@venturecomm.net ■ www.venturecomm.net

Office Hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. ■ Monday - Friday

2021 Scholarships Available:

Venture Communications is pleased to announce scholarship opportunities for the year 2021 have been mailed to local schools throughout our serving area. Venture Communications awards 12 Citizenship and Community Service Scholarships in the amount of \$500 each. This scholarship is available to high school seniors whose parent or legal guardian is an active subscriber of Venture Communications. The scholarships will be awarded based upon citizenship, community service, academics and school involvement.

Also available is the scholarship opportunity through the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) in conjunction with Venture Communications. All applicants must have a parent or legal guardian that has active service with Venture Communications. Applications and information for both scholarships are available from the local high school counselors or at www.venturecomm.net.

Winter High School Sports on Venture Digital TV:

Feb 6: Highmore-Harold Action Club Basketball Classic – Channel 399

Feb 12, 13: SD State Gymnastics Tournament – Channel 399

March 11, 12, 13: Class B Girls Basketball Tournament – Channel 399

March 11, 12, 13: Class A Girls Basketball Tournament – Channel 400

March 11, 12, 13: Class AA Girls Basketball Tournament – Channel 401

March 18, 19, 20: Class B Boys Basketball Tournament – Channel 399

March 18, 19, 20: Class A Boys Basketball Tournament – Channel 400

March 18, 19, 20: Class AA Boys Basketball Tournament – Channel 401

New VOD Releases! VIDEO ON DEMAND



Happy New Year!
2021

KEEPING YOU...



In Touch

January 2021 ■ Volume 45 ■ Number 486

**“Hello 2021,
what do you have
in store for us?”**



Message from
Fay Jandreau
Assistant
General Manager

I think that is the question we are all asking, and of course, expecting no answer in return. We all seem to be looking into 2021 with wandering eyes and wondering hearts, just hoping for any glimpse of a sign as to where we are headed. Well, I promise I won't help with any of that, I sure don't have any secrets or incredible insight into the future. But, amongst the challenges of 2020, I have noticed a few behavior shifts and trends that just might hang around for 2021. For starters, I can tell you for the first time ever, Venture has more broadband connections than voice or video connections. Yup, the Internet is in more Venture served homes than the telephone. Kind of unbelievable really. And wow... are we using those Internet connections! We have seen classrooms, board rooms, churches, and offices all move into our homes thanks to these broadband connections. It feels like the phrase “you are on mute” has replaced “hello” as a common greeting. Video meetings are replacing our face-to-face encounters and while they seem to lack the punch of a good ol' handshake and hearty “how ya doing”, it's sure nice to have the option available.

The adaptability of our society is just amazing. Sure, some of us “buck” the masks and social distancing; but we are all learning to deal with it. Adapting and overcoming, finding ways to keep moving forward. We experienced a little rationing, like the toilet paper fiasco and a lack of social engagements like going to church in person or catching a ball game. But, there too we have adapted and overcome finding ways to fill our needs and the needs of others. One year ago, I couldn't have imagined walking into my bank with a mask on and receiving a simple hello rather than a quick call to the police, some metal bracelets, and ride down town. I have always seen a “rise to the challenge” mentality here in the Dakotas, but this year it seems to be more prevalent than ever! Everywhere I look people are rising up, taking on big tasks and helping others in need. I never dreamt we would call upon UPS to deliver so many items to meet our daily needs AND the COVID vaccine too!

I'm not sure what 2021 will bring, but I do know we have some solid fiber fed broadband connections in place and some pretty incredible people who can use them to adapt and overcome any challenges that may come their way. I'm proud of this co-op and all that we have accomplished over the years, but I know that none of it would be possible without you the customer owners.

So, I will close by saying “Thank you” to all for giving us the opportunity to serve your communication needs in 2020, and reassure you that Venture is right here beside you, pushing forward into 2021. Here's to a prosperous new year!

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Utility *Scam* Awareness!

Utility customers all over the country are targeted by imposter utility scams on a nearly daily basis. Scammers typically use phone, in-person, and online tactics to target customers. In many cases, the caller will pose as utility company personnel and use false threats to persuade consumers to provide payment or personal identification information.

“Scammers posing as utility company personnel typically threaten service disconnection or a financial penalty hoping to make the target panic and react in haste. That’s why we tell South Dakotans to identify threatening language and an urgent need for action as warning signs,” said PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. “The way a payment is requested can be another red flag. No legitimate utility company will insist on immediate payment specifically through pre-paid debit cards or other untraceable methods,” he continued.



When it came to scam calls in the past, the most vulnerable groups were usually older and less tech-savvy. While these groups are still vulnerable, the development of new, more sophisticated scams have changed the risk outlook in recent years. According to the Federal Trade Commission, in 2019, millennials in the 20s and 30s were 25% more likely to report losing money to fraud than those 40 or older.

“The PUC wants to help South Dakotans protect their information, assets and identities. Learning to identify signs of a scam call and react appropriately are the first two steps to ensuring that you and your loved ones don’t fall victim to scammers. If you receive a suspicious phone call, hang up and contact your utility company using the phone number found on your utility bill. The company can verify if the call was legitimate and advise other customers not to fall for the same scheme,” states Vice Chairman Chris Nelson.

Scam calls can come in many shapes and sizes. Some versions have been around for years, but other newer versions may be more difficult to identify. Callers posing as tech support, claiming you’ve overpaid your utility bill, offering to restore power more quickly following a big storm and contacting you through text or SMS messages that you never signed up for are all common scams to be aware of.

“Telephone scammers are criminals who want to defraud and trick consumers. Unfortunately, they’re also very difficult to catch. That’s why, when it comes to avoiding scams, knowledge is power. Educating yourself about scam calls happening in your area, identifying resources available to you, and understanding how you should respond to a call if you receive one are great steps to take now,” said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

Submit your application for the federal programs!

Lifeline & Link-Up *Programs*

Venture Communications is proud to have helped many customers this past year through the FCC’s Lifeline Link-Up Program, providing discounted installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers.

Lifeline Program:

You may be eligible for the Lifeline Program and it’s up to \$9.25 monthly savings if you are a participant in at least one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), or Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit.

Enhanced Lifeline Program:

The Enhanced Lifeline Program provides telephone service to anyone who lives on tribal lands. It expands the eligibility requirements listed under the Lifeline Program to also include participation in: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance programs, Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Tribal Head Start, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. In addition, you may be eligible for the monthly savings if your household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Qualifying income levels for the year 2020 range from \$17,226 for a single person household to \$59,562 for a family of eight.

Link-Up Program:

Another Federal Program, Link-Up, provides for financial assistance with no connection charges for new customers living on tribal land. If you meet the eligibility requirement, you can apply 1 of 3 ways:

1. For a quicker response – enter your application online at www.checklifeline.org.
2. Mail your paper application to the Lifeline Support Center.
3. Fill out and submit your application online at the Venture Communication office. Applications are available online at www.lifelinesupport.com or at your local Venture Communications office.
4. If you have any questions about Lifeline or Link-Up, call us at 852-2224.

Venture Communications Cooperative Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil right law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institution participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communications for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA’s TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice & TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint-filing_cust.html and at any USDA office and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Fiber Optics *Battery* Backup

A backup power supply (battery) is required in order for your digital voice service to be in service, in the event of a power outage. A backup battery, like the one Venture Communications has provided and installed, allows regular corded landline phones to work during a power outage. This allows customers the ability to connect to 911 emergency services. In the event that a power outage should occur, customers should ensure they have a corded single-line touchtone phone connected directly to the ONT (optical network terminal) or your in-home wiring (wall jack) and the ONT connected directly to the Battery Backup Unit. If you connect a cordless phone, it will not function without a separate battery backup, and most cordless phones are not so equipped.

Venture’s battery backup allows you to continue to use your home voice telephone service during a power outage. Without a battery backup, customers will not be able to make any calls, including emergency calls to 911. Venture’s battery backup does not provide power to any service other than voice. Home security systems, medical monitoring devices and other equipment will not run on a home phone backup battery.

The backup battery provided by Venture is expected to last up to 8 hours in the event of a power outage depending upon battery age, usage and environment. Proper care of batteries includes storing at normal room temperatures. Battery backup units will display a battery light when the battery needs to be replaced. If you find the battery needs replacement, call Venture Communications at 852-2224.

Venture Communications offers a 24-hour battery backup solution for customers who feel they need additional backup time for their home voice services. An alternate 24-hour backup system is available at a price of \$100. Contact Venture for warranty information.

Please contact us at 852-2224 for details. The FCC mandates this message. It is not necessary for customers to take action.

Prevent telemarketers from calling your numbers!

Do-Not-Call *Notification*

You can REGISTER:
Online at www.donotcall.gov
OR call 888.382.1222

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have established a national Do-Not-Call Registry that applies to all telemarketers (with the exception of certain non-profit and political organizations) and covers both interstate and intrastate telemarketing calls. Commercial telemarketers are not allowed to call you if your number is listed on the registry.

You may register your phone number free, and it will remain on the national Do-Not-Call Registry. You may remove your name from the list at any time. The Do-Not-Call Registry will not prevent all unwanted calls.

It does NOT cover the following:

- calls from organizations with which you have established a business relationship
- calls for which you have given prior written consent
- calls which are not commercial or do not include unsolicited ads.
- calls by or on behalf of tax-exempt non-profit organizations

Consumers may register their residential telephone number, including wireless cellular numbers, on the national Do-Not-Call Registry at no cost by telephone or on the Internet. To register by telephone, consumers may call **1-888-382-1222**. For the hearing impaired, TTY call 866-290-4236. You must call from the phone number you wish to register. You may also register online at **www.donotcall.gov**.

Inclusion of your telephone number on the national Do-Not-Call Registry will be effective three months following your registration.

*Please
Read...*

Important Notice About Your Account

Federal law allows us to use information from your current records to market and advise you of new products and services that may satisfy your communications needs, unless you notify us otherwise.

What is this information?

It is information called "Customer Proprietary Network Information" or "CPNI" - relating to the telecommunications services you receive from Venture Communications.

How can we use this information?

This information can be used to advise you about innovative communications services or new communications technology and products offered by Venture. We DO NOT sell or in any way provide this information to any other company other than the 911 records we are required by law to provide, if you are a telephone customer.

Who will be able to use this information?

ONLY subsidiary companies of Venture Communications which include Venture Wireless and Venture Vision.

Will Venture protect my information?

YES! You have the right, and we have the duty, under federal law, to protect the confidentiality of this information. Therefore, regardless of whether you consent or not, to allowing us to continue providing you with educational mailings, your account will be treated confidentially.

What action is necessary on my part to show consent?

No action on your part is necessary. If you do not contact us within 30 days and indicate that we may not continue providing you with marketing and educational mailings, we will continue to do so.

What if I do not consent?

You can contact us at 605-852-2224. You will not receive company information from us at that point. You may miss the opportunity to learn of new, innovative service proposals, new packaging that could reduce your monthly bill and other information that keeps you informed of the happenings of Venture.

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