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A NEWSLETTER FOR CUSTOMERS OF SCC NETWORKS

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OFFICE CLOSURES

Our office will be closed:
 April 3 for Good Friday
 May 25 for Memorial Day

CATCH THIS MOUSE TO WIN!



This mouse is hiding in a photo somewhere in this newsletter. Find it and call your local SCC Networks office with the photo description to be entered in our "Mouse for Money" drawing for \$5.00 off your next bill. Good luck and we look forward to hearing from you!

Congratulations to Dale & Venita Escher and Jack & Betty Moore for catching the mouse in our last issue!



Internet Use Improves Learning, Collaboration and Engagement

The Internet has changed daily life in many ways, perhaps most notably in the area of gathering and exchanging information. A 2014 study by the Pew Research Center, *Americans Feel Better Informed Thanks to the Internet*, released survey results from 1,066 Internet users over 18 years of age. Below are selected statistics from this study, which highlight some of the key Internet advantages cited by the respondents:



- Enhanced Learning:** 87 percent credit the Internet and cell phones with improving their ability to learn new things; 53 percent say this connectivity has helped enhance their learning "a lot."
- Informed Students and Non-Students:** 77 percent say the Internet has made today's students informed, while 76 percent believe that Internet access has made average Americans better informed.
- Greater Idea Sharing and Collaboration:** 72 percent of survey respondents say digital technologies have enhanced idea sharing and collaboration with others, which might be attributed to social networking sites.
- Higher Engagement with News and Civic Life:** 75 percent say, as a result of their Internet and cell phone connectivity, they feel better informed about national news; 49 percent feel they know more about civic and government activities in their local community due to digital technology.
- Better Informed about Products and Services:** 81 percent of respondents claim they know more about products and services today than they did five years ago, thanks to their Internet and cell phone use.

In addition, most of the Internet users surveyed in this study expressed positive attitudes about having so much information at their fingertips, as opposed to feeling negative effects from information overload.

To see other information from the Pew Research Center, visit www.pewresearch.org.



SCC Networks is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



It's Important to Understand the Rural Call Completion Issue

Are long distance calls not getting through to you? Many people living in rural America are still experiencing intermittent problems receiving long distance phone calls from across the country. You may have encountered any of the following:

- Someone tells you he/she tried to call you but the call didn't get through, or the caller heard ringing but you didn't.
- A call came through to you but the quality was poor.
- A call came through but the Caller ID was incorrect.

Failed or degraded calls not only undermine the integrity of the nation's telephone networks and frustrate consumers, they also pose a serious risk to public safety and harm the rural economy. For example, schools may not be able to reach parents with critical alerts, and small businesses may be losing customers.

The problem starts with the long distance carrier used by the customer who makes the call, and can only be resolved by this carrier. The problem occurs when the original long distance carrier chooses to use the least expensive route to transmit the call. In most cases, the lowest-cost route is IP-based, and because there are no rules governing the transfer of phone calls over IP systems, there is an inconsistent quality of service, which can result in restricted traffic. Local telecommunications providers, such as SCC Networks, are not the cause of the problem. We strive to provide excellent service at all times, and are as frustrated as you are by the inconsistent practices of some long distance carriers and their agents.

Action is currently being taken by the FCC and its Rural Call Completion Task Force.

It includes staff from the agency's Wireline Competition, Public Safety and Homeland Security, and Enforcement Bureaus. Most recently, the Wireline Competition Bureau issued a Declaratory Ruling to clarify the FCC's stated prohibition on actions taken by companies which may restrict telephone traffic in any way.

This ruling reminds long distance carriers that it is illegal to block, choke or reduce long distance traffic and that this prohibition also includes any practices that lead to call termination or call quality problems. These practices would violate the Communications Act of 1934 because it is seen as unreasonable discrimination of those of us who reside in rural areas of the United States. To read the entire document, visit: www.fcc.gov/document/wcb-issues-declaratory-ruling-rural-call-completion-issues

There are things you can do to help:

- Ask for the name of the long distance carrier used by the person trying to reach you.
- Call SCC Networks and give us the name of the carrier used by the caller, your phone number, the number of the person trying to call you and the date and time of the problem call. We'll contact the carrier on your behalf to try and resolve the issue.
- Go to www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/problems-long-distance-or-wireless-calling-rural-areas for more information on the call completion issue or to file a complaint with the FCC against the carrier used by the person trying to call you (not SCC Networks). Encourage your caller to do the same.

For more information, visit www.grm.net/phone/call-completion-issues.

We'll continue to monitor this situation and keep you updated. As always, please contact us if you have concerns, and we'll assist you in any way we can.

COMMON METHODS USED BY IDENTITY THIEVES

Skilled identity thieves use a variety of methods to steal your personal information including:

- **Dumpster Diving**—They rummage through trash looking for bills or other paper with your personal information on it.
- **Skimming**—They steal credit/debit card numbers by using a special storage device when processing your card.
- **Phishing**—They pretend to be financial institutions or companies and send spam or pop-up messages to get you to reveal your personal information.
- **Changing Your Address**—They divert your billing statements to another location by completing a "change of address" form with the United States Post Office.
- **"Old-Fashioned" Stealing**—They steal wallets and purses. They also steal mail including bank and credit card statements, pre-approved credit offers, new checks, and tax information. Identity thieves may even steal personnel records from their employers or bribe employees who have access to these records.

One way to avoid having financial and personal information in your mailbox is to use eBilling. To sign up to receive and pay your SCC Networks bills online, visit www.grm.net/ebill.



Protect Your Home Before Your Vacation

You see your vacation as an opportunity for fun and relaxation. Unfortunately, burglars see it as an opportunity to get inside your house more easily and take off with your valuables.

You can do a lot to reduce your chances of being a property crime victim by taking simple precautions to protect your home before you leave town:

- Inform trusted neighbors that you will be gone and for how long. Ask them to keep an eye on your home.
- Stop mail and newspaper deliveries or have a neighbor pick them up each day.
- Depending on the season, make arrangements to have your lawn mowed or snow shoveled so that your house appears occupied. Also use timers on lights, setting them to go on and off at different times.
- Double check that you've locked all doors and windows, including all doors in the garage. You may want to unplug the cord to the garage door opener so it can't be opened with a code.
- Don't announce your absence on your answering machine or voice mail message.
- If you have a security system on your house, make sure it is working and on.
- Don't leave a key hidden outside. Leave it with a friend or family member instead.

By completing these tasks before your vacation, you can really rest easy when you get there.

WHAT IS NET NEUTRALITY?

You've probably heard and seen the term "net neutrality" in news reports but may not be sure exactly what it means. In the interest of keeping our customers informed about Internet issues, SCC Networks offers you this quick overview.

Net neutrality means that Internet service providers (ISPs) treat all Internet traffic equally. ISPs are the ones responsible for "the last mile" of Internet access, which goes from the big Internet backbone servers to your computer. Under net neutrality, ISPs have to treat small amounts of data the same as big amounts of data, like data that comes from a site such as Netflix.

For a while now, ISPs have been asking the FCC for permission to treat high-volume data transfer differently, permitting the companies transmitting a lot of data to pay extra to get priority on transferring their data. This would give these companies a "fast lane" to consumers and give ISPs additional money to upgrade their systems to handle the traffic. Under the new net neutrality rules, "fast lanes" are not allowed.

You can learn more about net neutrality at www.fcc.gov/guides/open-internet.



**BEFORE
YOU DIG
CALL
811**

All sorts of utility lines, pipes, and cables could be buried on your property and easily damaged by even shallow digging. This can result in service interruptions to your entire neighborhood.

Before you dig, call 811 to have utility lines marked. Simply tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you'll be doing. The affected local utilities will send a locator to your property, free of charge. Then you'll know what's below and be able to dig safely.

Now Available !



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