citizens

Technology for Your Community

| TELEPHONE | TELEVISION | INTERNET | BUSINESS | MEDICAL |

Manager's Minute
"Are we there yet? Almost!"

At the end of 2021, your Cooperative completed 414 miles of the 686 miles construction in our fiber to the home project. Only 272 miles to go!

In 2021, we completed areas that totaled 157 miles. Our goals are very ambitious for 2022! We need to do almost twice as much construction this year. We remain diligent and barring any weather delays, we look to meet our construction goals to be complete by the end of the year.

Welcome to Gig Country! Nearly 65% of the County is eligible to connect to CitiZip Gigabit Fiber.

In 2020, we passed 3,298 homes with fiber and ended the year with 816 Fiber Customers (25%). At the end of 2021, we passed 6,133 Homes and connected 1,450 Fiber Customers (24%). In 2021 we picked up the availability of Fiber to an additional 2,800 homes and did 634 installs. That is on average 12 installs a week -- in addition to the Copper Hill expansion.

In addition to the ACAM project areas left to complete, we received a VATI grant that will add in a few additional small areas (Dobbins Hollow and Mabry Mill) that will be worked in by summer 2023. This grant also will help customers with long driveways/private roads (there is a financial limit for this assistance). We are currently in the process of notifying customers that benefit from this grant.

2022 looks to be a VERY busy year and we could not be more excited to continue to provide you with Quality Service, Excellent Support, and Advanced Technology!

Sincerely,
Greg Sapp
CEO & General Manager

Affordable Connectivity Program Helping Households Connect

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit provides a discount of up to $30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households.

Eligible households can enroll through a participating broadband provider or directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an online or mail-in application.

You can learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information, by visiting **www.fcc.gov/ACP**, or by calling **877-384-2575**.
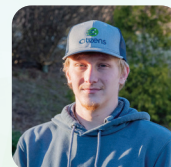
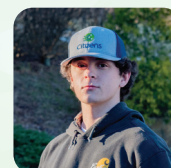## Employee Recognition
Thank you for your dedication to Citizens

Congratulations to **Gary Biggs**, I & R Tech on 20 years of service.

Welcome Aboard!

Tyler Bain
I & R Tech

John Reece
Plant Maintenance Tech

DCJS #11-9804

New Dialing Procedure for Customers with the Virginia 540 Area Code

All customers with the 540 area code should prepare for 10-digit dialing and the introduction of the new 826 area code. The 826 area code will be added as an overlay to the 540 region. An overlay is the addition of another area code (826) to the same geographic region served by an existing area code (540). **An overlay does not require customers to change their existing area code but does require customers to dial the area code to complete local calls.**

A permissive dialing period began on November 13, 2021, to give consumers adequate time to adjust to the dialing changes. During this period, local calls can be made with either 7 or 10 digits, and all calls that are local will continue to be local even though you dial 10 digits.

Beginning May 14, 2022, mandatory 10 digit dialing will begin. All local calls made within the VA 540 area code must be placed using 10 digits (area code + the 7-digit telephone number).

Beginning June 14, 2022, NEW telephone lines or services may be assigned numbers using the new 826 area code.

The key facts for consumers to know about the upcoming VA 540/826 area code overlay are:

- Your current telephone number, including the current area code, **WILL NOT** change.
- If you seek new phone service on and after June 14, 2022, you may be assigned a phone number with the 826 area code.
- You will need to dial the area code + telephone number for all local calls, including calls within the same area code.
- You will continue to dial 1 + area code + telephone number for all long-distance calls.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call.

- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the overlay.
- You can still dial just three digits to reach 911. You can also dial three digits to reach 211 and 811, as well as 311 and 511, where available.

Please remember to identify your telephone number as a 10-digit number and include the area code when giving the number to friends, family, business associates, and customers, etc.

Customers should ensure all services, automatic dialing equipment, applications, software, or other types of equipment are reprogrammed to dial 10 digits if they are programmed to dial just 7 digits and recognize the new 826 area code as a valid area code. Examples include life-safety systems, fax machines, Internet dial-up numbers, gates, ankle monitors, speed dialers, mobile phone contact lists, call forwarding settings, voicemail services, and similar functions. Be sure to check your business stationery, advertising materials, personal checks, and your personal or pet ID tags to ensure the area code is included in your telephone number.

Important safety and security equipment, such as medical alert devices, and alarm and security systems must be programmed to use 10-digit dialing. Many systems operate on 10-digit dialing by default, but some older equipment may still use 7 digits. Please contact your medical alert or security provider if you are not sure whether your equipment needs to be reprogrammed to accommodate the upcoming change to 10-digit local dialing. Any needed reprogramming of alarm and home security equipment must be done between November 13, 2021, and May 14, 2022.

Remember that all local calls must be programmed using 10 digits, and add '1' for all long-distance calls.

For additional information, please visit the Virginia State Corporation Commission at https://www.scc.virginia.gov or contact Citizens Telephone Cooperative at 540.745.2111.

Heerre Phishy, Phishy, Phishy…

If you enjoy taking those cute quizzes on social media, you may have been Phished by Cybercriminals.

Simple questions like:
- Tell us your age by mentioning a store that is no longer around.
- Tell us where you grew up without mentioning the state
- Have you ever traveled outside of the country?
- Who is your favorite fictional character?

Answers to simple questions like these could give cybercriminals the data they need to gain access to your sensitive information.

How can this information be used?
While the social media quiz may seem harmless, your answers reveal a lot about you.

- Mentioning retailers that are no longer in business give a date range of your age.

- Giving clues to your hometown lets them drill into geographic information and can be used to verify your identity.
- Many answers to security questions to verify your identity are the town where you grew up or where you were born. Same for where you went to high school. Cybercriminals could gain account information by using this information to answer security questions
- Answering if you have traveled outside the country lets cybercriminals know which form of identification you have to help them steal your identity.
- Your favorite fictional character reveals your interest. Cybercriminals could use this information to target you on social media; claiming to have a shared interest. Knowing your favorite movies and book can provide hints to gain your passwords.

Keep these Safety Tips in Mind:
- Don't share any information online that you would not want to make public.

Anything posted on social media is "Social" meaning it is open to the public No matter how cautious you are; it can still fall into the wrong hands.

- Share the risks with your friends and family when you see them respond to these quizzes. Keep in mind that cybercriminals can make the connection between you and your friend's post. This puts you and others at risk.
- Review and edit your privacy settings to be sure your information is kept safe. Social media platforms have many security options that can be easily overlooked, such as your tagged photo settings.
- Don't accept Friend Requests from people that you do not know in real life.
- Avoid using social media logins to log into other websites.

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www.citizens.coop | 540.745.2111 | 276.637.6485