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FIBER TECHNOLOGY

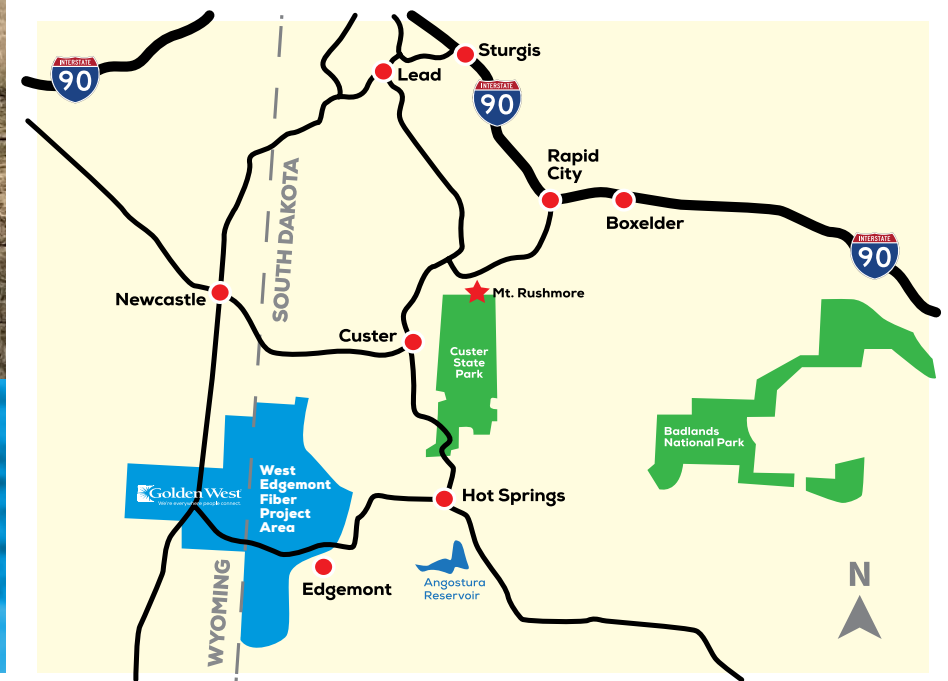
WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT

Rural west Edgemont area enjoys advanced broadband connection.

■ FIBER FOR ALL INCLUDES RURAL AREAS

The recently completed west Edgemont project brought a fiber optic connection to more than 200 people living in 66 homes and to one essential community facility. The project involved 126 miles of construction covering 411 square miles. That means there is only one subscriber every six square miles here.

Golden West is working to bring fiber optic technology to all areas it serves over the next five or six years. Today, more than 70% of members are directly connected via the fiber optic network.



‘We feel lucky to have fiber optics’

Sweet clover, sage brush, and bromegrass line the borrow pits along the two-lane ribbon of U.S. Hwy. 18 as it winds over hills, down draws, and around ridges west of Edgemont, South Dakota, into Wyoming. Ranching reigns supreme here with cows, round bales of hay, stock dams, and windmills outnumbering homes along the rural landscape.

“Our closest neighbor is seven or eight miles away, which is just awesome,” says Toy Litzel, who lives on the state line. “I love that there are no people.”

The southwestern corner of South Dakota and eastern edge of Wyoming is one of the most sparsely populated areas served by Golden West, with an average of only one subscriber every six square miles. As part of Golden West’s commitment to provide high-speed internet access across its service territory, the cooperative completed a fiber to the home project here earlier this year.

The infrastructure in place before the upgrade wasn’t conducive for internet service. Afterwards, the Litzels added Golden West internet service and took advantage of the fastest internet speed available to them.

“We love it,” Toy says about the speed they receive over the fiber optic network. “We wanted to make sure we got the good stuff. When all the kids are here, they are all on their phones and everybody can be on the Wi-Fi, and it doesn’t slow down.”

ReConnect Grant Helps Fund Project

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded Golden West a \$1.7 million ReConnect grant in 2020 to help provide broadband service west of Edgemont. When awarding the grant, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue likened the need for broadband connectivity in rural America to the need for electricity and telephone services decades ago.

“The ReConnect grant covered almost half the cost of the project,” says Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “The extra funds brought much needed connectivity years ahead of schedule to the 200-plus people in this area.”

The Rural Electric Association first offered electricity west of Edgemont in the 1950s. Phone service was available from Northwestern Bell and later the People’s Telephone and Telegraph Company of Hot Springs before Golden West took over in early 1982. Four decades later rural residents here have dedicated fiber optic lines delivering the most advanced broadband connection available today. This connection is better than what residents of many larger cities have, including the largest cities in western South Dakota.

From Homestead to Fiber Optics

“We never dreamed we’d ever see fiber optics out in our part of the country, because of the lack of population density,” says Clyde Bayne,

“We never dreamed we’d ever see fiber optics out in our part of the country, because of the lack of population density.” - Clyde Bayne

one of Golden West’s few subscribers in Wyoming. “I thought, ‘They’re not going to come out this far for a half dozen homes.’ But they did, and we are pretty happy about it. We feel lucky to have fiber optics.”

Clyde’s great-grandparents homesteaded along the Cheyenne River in Wyoming 100 years ago midway between Edgemont and Newcastle, Wyoming. Clyde and Nancy took over the ranch about 30 years ago. The couple raises Red Angus/Charolais cross cattle and continues adding to the operation. Clyde also works as an insurance agent and Nancy works for the U.S. Forest Service, both out of Newcastle.

“We tried dial-up internet in the early 1990s,” Clyde says. “It would take an hour

to download an email and then it would usually lock up.”

Fiber Optics Beat Satellite

The Baynes went with satellite internet after that. It worked, but they dealt with weather interferences and data limits. The fiber optic connection has worked much better.

“For the type of work that my wife and I do, it’s nice to be able to telecommute if we have to,” Clyde says. “It’s been good for us.”

Internet Offers More Options

Toy Litzel uses the internet to search for parts and research equipment

repairs for his ranching operation and for reliable email. His wife, Brenda, operates a couple of businesses from home selling crafts and other items online. “Now she’s selling stuff all over the United States, which is possible thanks to the internet,” he says.

Clyde acknowledges his rural location may not be for everyone, but he can’t imagine living anywhere else. He enjoys the abundance of fresh air and wide-open spaces. “It’s a slower pace, but it’s a very rewarding type of lifestyle.”

Clyde hopes his two adult children will return to the ranch one day, and the fiber optic connection may help lure them. He’s also restoring and adding on to another residence there just in case. “After you spend 100 years ranching here, you don’t want to see it disappear.”

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

OFFERS MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS INTERVENTION STARTING JULY 16

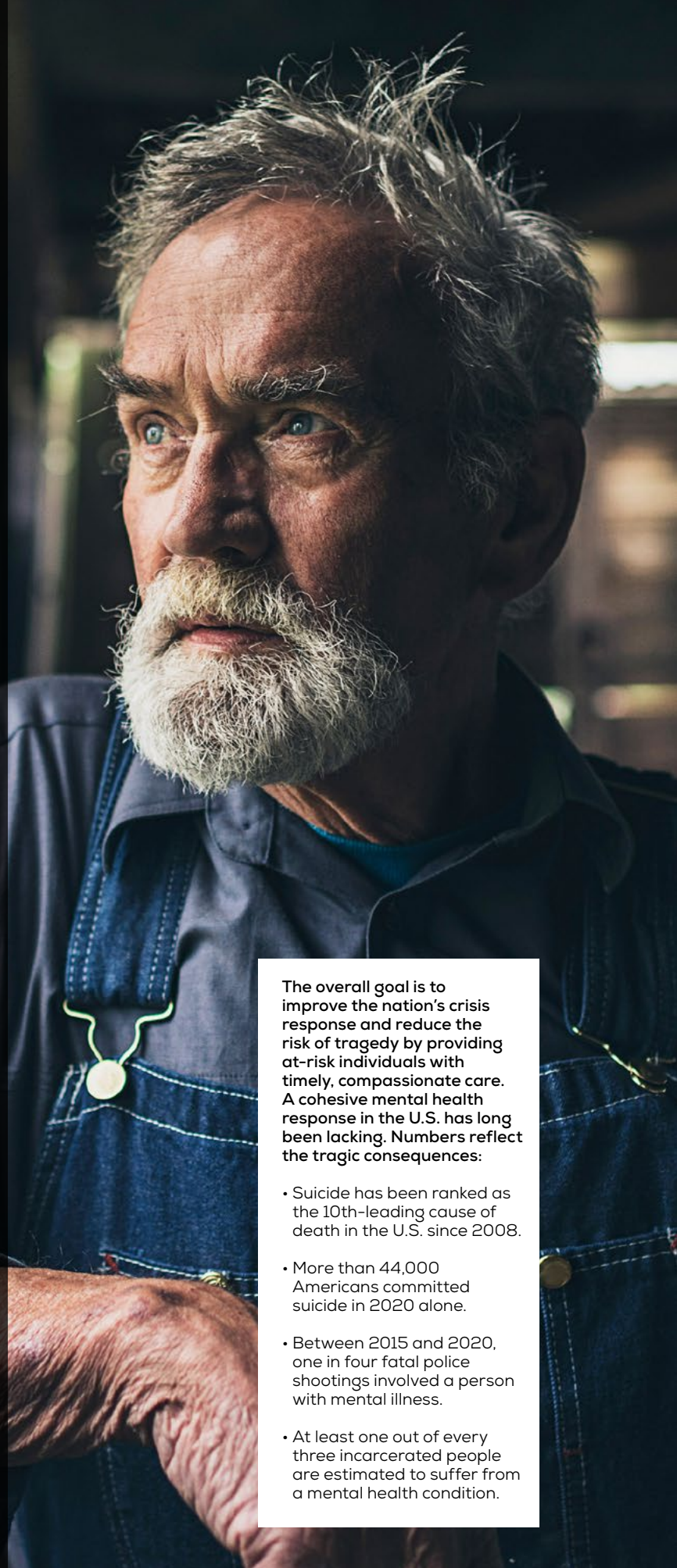
Golden West recognizes the importance of keeping members connected and safe. Three-digit dialing codes have long provided easy access to everything from road conditions to community and emergency services. Beginning July 16, you will be able to speak with a trained counselor by dialing 988 — a new national mental health crisis and suicide prevention hotline.

The addition of the 988 hotline is the reason everyone in the 605 area code — and in most area codes across the country — must now dial 10 digits for all calls. While doing so might seem like a hassle, it's a small price to pay to enable those suffering from a mental health crisis to quickly and easily find help.

Trained Counselors Provide Professional Help

In times of crisis, individuals often have nobody to turn to. This can lead to acts of violence or self-harm. To provide people experiencing emotional distress with access to a trained counselor, the Federal Communications Commission designated 988 as a national crisis hotline. After two years of preparations, dialing that three-digit code will now connect callers with a mental health professional, who will provide support and offer resources to those in need.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, established in 2005, has made a difference. Studies show after speaking with a counselor callers feel less suicidal, less depressed, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful. While the original number will remain active at 1-800-273-8255, the FCC believes the simpler, easier-to-remember 988 three-digit number will have an even bigger positive impact.



The overall goal is to improve the nation's crisis response and reduce the risk of tragedy by providing at-risk individuals with timely, compassionate care. A cohesive mental health response in the U.S. has long been lacking. Numbers reflect the tragic consequences:

- Suicide has been ranked as the 10th-leading cause of death in the U.S. since 2008.
- More than 44,000 Americans committed suicide in 2020 alone.
- Between 2015 and 2020, one in four fatal police shootings involved a person with mental illness.
- At least one out of every three incarcerated people are estimated to suffer from a mental health condition.

Here's a Contest That Will Make You 'Shutter!'

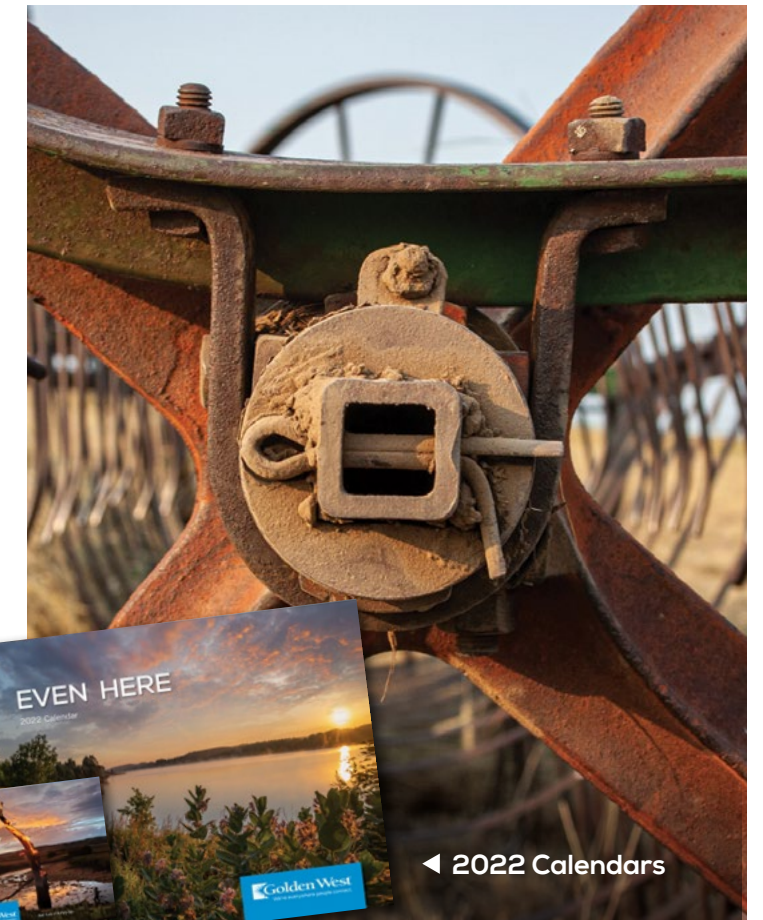
Your South Dakota photo could earn you up to 31 days of infamy.

Got an eye for great scenery? When you go shooting, does your ammo consist of lenses and memory cards? If so, we're really going to "click!"

The Golden West Photo Contest is now open for submissions. Golden West is looking for your favorite shots of people, places, and things within the cooperative's service territory. Selected photos will be posted online at theexchangesd.com/photo-contest, where members will have the opportunity to vote for their favorites.

Don't hesitate; the contest will be over in a "flash!" Photos must be received by Aug. 31, 2022, to be eligible for the contest. Voting takes place Sept. 7-13, 2022. The top 12 photos will be featured at 6" wide by 5" tall in Golden West's small 2023 calendar with the opportunity for an extraordinary shot or two to be included in our large 15" x 11" business calendar.

High-resolution digital images are preferred, but hard copy photos in good condition will be accepted. Only one photo is eligible to be featured in the calendar, so show us your best stuff! If multiple photos are submitted, the Golden West Marketing Department will select one for the contest. By entering, you grant Golden West permission to use your photo(s) in social media and other platforms to promote the organization and its customers.



To enter, complete the online form and upload your photo at theexchangesd.com/photo-entry. Submit one form for each photo entry. Results will be announced online in October. After the calendars are printed later in the year, winners will each be mailed complimentary copies.

If you only have hard copy photos, mail them to:

Golden West Marketing Dept.
2511 N. Plaza Dr.
Rapid City, SD 57702

Golden West has little leverage when it comes to contractual pricing.



Networks Have Upper Hand Over Programming Fees

Price increases are one of those unpleasant realities we all face. In 2022, this has become especially obvious when filling gas or shopping for groceries can cause sticker shock. Many factors impact the price of a gallon of gas or milk. The same is true for cable television rates.

Beginning Aug. 1, 2022, Golden West cable subscribers will pay a little more each month to cover programming costs. While Golden West would love to keep cable rates the same, forces beyond our control make this impossible.

What Factors Impact Pricing?

Cable rates are impacted by two separate external forces: programming charges and retransmission consent fees. While both are negotiated contractual costs, the stations and programmers have the upper hand. If their demands aren't met, they won't share their signals. They just might hold Spongebob Squarepants hostage!

Retransmission consent fees are what affiliate broadcast stations – the local

channels for NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox – charge cable operators like Golden West to retransmit their signals. Retransmission consent fees generally change toward the beginning of each year.

Golden West passes retransmission consent fees on to the consumer. The cooperative does not keep one cent of these fees. **For more information about retransmission consent fees, visit goldenwest.com/retransmission.**

Programming fees are the negotiated amounts Golden West must pay cable networks to broadcast their content. These costs also typically change annually. The impending August adjustment is specified as a message on July bills.

Major Cable Networks Have Leverage

Golden West works to limit price increases, but unfortunately, several major cable networks have leverage due to the significant number of channels they own. One entity, for example, currently controls over 40 different cable channels.

These networks have the edge in negotiations. They dictate not only which channels Golden West must carry, but also which cable package(s) must include those channels. For every popular cable network, Golden West might be required to carry five or six lesser channels across all packages, each at an additional cost.

The three largest entities – which together control 65 to 75 cable channels – account for almost all the programming rate changes. Smaller cable networks have kept rates largely unchanged.

Cooperative Advocates for Members

Similar to retransmission consent fees, Golden West passes programming charges on to the consumer.

The cooperative will continue to advocate on behalf of its members, but our hands are tied when dealing with large monopolies. This doesn't mean we'll ever stop trying!

2022 Scholarship Winners Exemplify Success

 NOW IN ITS 24TH YEAR, THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM HAS CONTRIBUTED OVER \$1 MILLION IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SINCE ITS LAUNCH.

Golden West's scholarship program has been going strong since 1999. Every year, the cooperative awards \$1,000 scholarships to more than 40 deserving high school seniors across the service territory. Contributions now total over \$1 million! These students possess qualities including leadership, academic success, civic and extracurricular achievement, and the motivation to succeed.

Golden West is excited to introduce the 2022 scholarship winners.

- Armour High School..... Kase Brouwer
- Avon High School Katie Gretschmann
- Bennett Co. High School..... Grace Jager
- Bon Homme High School..... Camille Sykora
- Burke High School..... Ben Witt
- Bridgewater High School..... Taylor Schallenkamp
- Canistota High School..... Connor Hutcheson
- Colome High School..... Maya Vandembark
- Corsica High School..... Jacob Woerner
- Crazy Horse High School..... Gracie High Horse
- Custer High School..... Anne Hubbard
- Dell Rapids High School..... Landon Ruesink
- Edgemont High School..... Morgan Peterson
- Faith High School..... Cassidy Schnelke
- Freeman Academy..... Maria Cortes
- Freeman High School..... Ava Ammann
- Gregory High School..... Christian Spann
- Hot Springs High School..... Brooke Harkless
- Jones Co. High School..... Noah Karg
- Kadoka High School..... Andi Stone
- Lakota Tech High School..... Kaylee Miller

- Lower Brule High School..... Denver Crane
- Lyman County High School..... Emma Chester
- Marion High School..... Ashley Hernandez
- Menno High School..... Paityn Huber
- Montrose High School..... Katelyn Lueth
- New Underwood High School..... Logan Albers
- Oelrichs High School..... Tyricee Two Lance
- Philip High School..... Bobbie Jarvi
- Pine Ridge High School..... Serra Bettelyoun
- Plankinton High School..... Shyla Tobin
- Red Cloud Indian School..... Caleb Flournoy
- Scotland High School..... Delanie Van Driel
- St. Mary High School..... Addyson Gilbert
- Sturgis Brown High School..... Kody Komes
- Todd Co. High School..... Tommie Raymond
- Tri-Valley High School..... Isaac McFarland
- Wall High School..... Ava Dinger
- West Central High School..... Emily Hofer
- White River High School..... Kelsey Morrison
- Winner High School..... Jenna Hammerbeck
- At Large Scholarship..... Ellie Jaspers

Learn more about the Golden West Scholarship recipients at goldenwest.com/scholarships.

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Enter to Win & Celebrate Summer at the Fair!

Golden West proudly supports county fairs across our service territory every year, and this year we're also giving four lucky members two passes apiece to either the Central States or Sioux Empire fairs.

- **The Sioux Empire Fair** will be held Aug. 5-13 in Sioux Falls. The Siouxper Pass includes fair admission, most (but not all) grandstand entertainment, and unlimited carnival rides all nine days of the fair.
- **The Central States Fair & Rodeo** will be held Aug. 19-27 in Rapid City. The Premier Pass includes fair admission, special parking through the Cambell Street entrance, and premier seating for all grandstand events including concerts, rodeos, and motorsports.

Visit theexchangesd.com/win, pick your preferred pass, and enter to win!

Must be a Golden West customer and be at least 18 years of age to enter. No purchase necessary and only one entry per household. Winners will be contacted and announced on Golden West's website and Facebook page.
DRAWING WILL BE HELD AT 9 A.M. THURSDAY, JULY 28.

Cruise Through Summer

Sign Up for
eStatements

& Get a **\$15 Bill Credit**

Safe. Simple. Secure.

Set up an account online in minutes and select "web only" statements. Then access eStatements through Golden West's secure, encrypted site. goldenwest.com/estatemnts

Online payment methods are available for all customers at no charge. eStatement promotion runs from June 1 through July 31, 2022. Savings will be applied as a one-time bill credit. Limit one bill credit per account. You must maintain "web only" statements for six months. If you resume mailed paper statements sooner than 6 months, Golden West will bill the promotional offer back to your account.



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