CEO MESSAGE

Hello, everyone, thank you for reading our newsletter. In this issue I would like to talk about a topic I get questions on fairly frequently. When I am out and about, I get asked, "Why do I have to mail my check to Dallas? Don't we have people in South Texas we can do our banking with?"
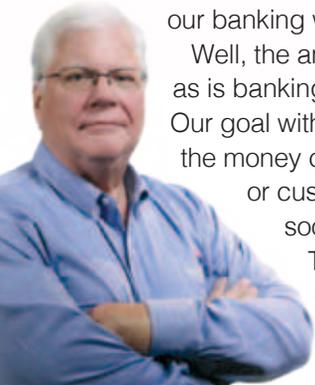
Well, the answer is complex – as is banking in current times. Our goal with collections is to get the money credited to a member or customer account as soon as possible. To accomplish this, we use a banking service called "lockbox". Lockbox is a service that allows a company to have its customers send payments directly to the bank. In our case, we have our members and customers send money to a P.O. Box in Dallas. This P.O. Box is linked to the national bank that handles our accounts. This allows the bank to receive the payments quicker and deposit them immediately. Most times, a check mailed to the bank lockbox will be credited to your account at least one or two days earlier than if it came all the way to Raymondville. This is a very cost-effective way to handle collections, and it brings benefits and efficiencies to both the customers and the Company. Also, if you mailed your check in late, the lockbox posting may help prevent your service from being interrupted for non-pay.

We are also currently in discussions with a bank based in the Rio Grande

Hurricane Preparedness – Are You Ready?

HURRICANE SEASON is June 1 – Nov. 30

Preparedness Checklist:

- Make an Evacuation Plan. Find activated evacuation routes here: DriveTexas.org or by dialing (800) 452-9292. Call 2-1-1 to find out if you live in an evacuation zone.
- Sign-Up for Emergency Alerts. Make sure your device is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).
- Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit. Learn how to build an emergency kit at **https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit**
- Review Your Home Insurance Policy.
- Register with State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR): **https://STEAR.dps.texas.gov** or by dialing 2-1-1 if you live in evacuation zone and:
- have a disability or medical needs and do not have a car or other vehicle to use in an evacuation.
- have a disability or medical needs and do not have friends or family to help in an evacuation. **STEAR Registry information collected is confidential**

Hurricane Preparedness Online Resources:

Texas Division of Emergency Management Website: www.dps.texas.gov/dem
Texas Department of State Health Services: www.texasprepares.org
American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
U.S. Department of Homeland Security: www.ready.gov
Office of the Texas Governor Greg Abbott: www.gov.texas.gov

Valley to replace the lockbox service we now have. While they are willing to set up a lockbox address in the Rio Grande Valley – probably a McAllen address – they tell us that using the lockbox banking service in Dallas is still the most efficient and cost-effective way to process payments for the customer and the company. The lockbox banking service in Dallas is across the street from Love Field Airport and receives mail deliveries several times per day. This allows your payment multiple opportunities to arrive at the bank quicker and to be posted. This is a win-win situation for both the customer and the company.

I am also asked, "Will using the lockbox service lead to the laying off of customer service representatives?" The answer – no, nothing could be further from the truth. With the growth we are experiencing, lockbox service simply trims the number of new employees we would need to hire to collect and process payments. The outsourcing of this process is simply a cost effective way for the Company

to handle the volume of payments that we receive. Most bank, gas, and department store credit cards use lockbox services for exactly these same reasons.

So, to summarize:

• Lockbox service enables faster posting of your payments and may prevent your service from being suspended;

• Lockbox service enables us to receive the funds quicker and put them to work; and

• Lockbox service has no effect on our staffing and, in fact, enables our customer service representatives to concentrate on taking your calls and helping you with your service needs and questions.

Thanks for reading – have a great summer!

The Use of Wireless Sensor Networks **in Precision Agriculture**

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSN) are the latest technology for implementing efficient and inexpensive Precision Agriculture (PA). Prior to PA, farmers relied on satellite and aircraft images or other map-based systems to accurately target their growing areas.

Precision Agriculture provides real-time feedback for several different crop and site variables. As its name implies, Precision Agriculture is precise in the delivery amounts of water, fertilizer, etc. and the size of the crop area it monitors. This technology can isolate a single plant for monitoring and nurturing, or an area in the tens or hundreds of square feet. The data collection, monitoring and materials applied to the crops allows for higher yields and lower cost with less impact to the environment. Each area receives only what it requires for its exact space, and at the appropriate time and duration.

Wireless Sensor Networks for agriculture are similar to those used in other industries such as Industrial Controls, Building Automation and Security Systems. The WSN system requires a centralized control unit with user interface, communication gateways and routers, power elements and most importantly – the sensors.

Unlike other systems, Precision Agriculture requires a unique software model for each geographical area, the inherent soil type and the type of crop or plants. For example, each location will receive its own optimal amount of water, fertilizer and pesticide.

Data collection should be done on an hourly basis. Collecting the data more frequently doesn't provide additional useful information for the software model and becomes a burden to the Wireless Sensor Network in terms of power consumption and data transmission. Less frequent monitoring may be acceptable for certain slow growth crops and areas that have very stable, uniform climate conditions. A general agricultural application can be used for:

- Crop yield improvement
- Tracking farm animals
- Large crop area monitoring
- Forest / vegetation monitoring
- Forest fire prevention
- Biomass studies

While agriculture is typically thought of as land-based, the concepts are also applicable to water and under-water ecosystems. Air temperature for crops is often as critical as water temperature for marine plants. A similar correlation can be made for sunlight and pH levels.

Sensors are used to monitor the following criteria:

- Soil moisture
- Soil acidity / pH
- Temperature
- Humidity
- Barometric pressure
- Carbon dioxide gasses

The modeling software incorporates the data from the sensors in a feedback loop which activates the Control Network. This provides the optimal amounts of water, fertilizer, etc. to the individual locations at varying times.

The Control Network is responsible for:

- Valve / irrigation operation
- Animal control (e.g., open and close gates)
- Water pressure
- Heating / cooling
- Fertilizer dispersal
- Pesticide dispersal
- Sunlight / shading (typically in an enclosed growing area)

As the cost for sensors and communications infrastructure trends downward, more growers are implementing Wireless Sensor Networks for their crops. This is becoming more common with smaller farms, micro-farms and urban farms. In these situations, the crop yields are critical as growers may only have a very small area and unique space requirements to contend with.

WSN technology makes it possible to monitor and specifically target each crop, making it practical and cost-effective to implement Precision Agriculture regardless of the growing area. This technology is also easily scalable by adding additional communication hubs and sensors.

What's the
Best Smart Security Camera
FOR YOU?

When everyone claims to make the best home security camera, how do you choose?

There are HD cameras. Wide-angle cameras. 1080p cameras with night vision. Indoor, outdoor and doorbell cameras. Do you look for the latest features, the biggest discounts or the best security camera reviews? With so much to consider, it's easy to miss a very important detail. It's not all about the camera. Look at the platform first.

While a smart security camera's components, design and engineering make a big difference, the software platform is where the "smart" part happens. Your camera's app and its features, your video alerts and your customization options are all determined by this layer of digital technology.

Alarm.com-powered cameras come fully integrated into our platform and app through your smart home security system. As well as best-in-class hardware, they give you advanced video features, extra home security benefits, and an easy, professionally-supported experience.

1: See what's going on from anywhere, anytime.

Whether you're investigating a strange noise outside, or just saying hello to your kids from the office, the Alarm.com app makes things easy.

You can view a live stream from any camera with your smartphone, tablet, desktop, Apple Watch or even your TV. You can be at work and still talk to a visitor at your door. If you get an alert that your alarm is going off, you can open a camera feed, zoom in to see what's going on, then verify or cancel the alarm signal—all from the same screen.

Viewing recorded footage is just as easy. Alarm.com stores your video clips securely on our cloud servers for you to watch, download and share whenever you need it.

2: Stay in the know with intelligent clips and alerts.

All smart security cameras have motion detectors that trigger video recordings and smartphone alerts. Got a busy home? You can look forward to a lot of alerts—or you can take the Alarm.com route instead.

With security system intelligence, our cameras understand what's going on. It means you can customize and filter your alerts for a better experience. For example, you can have Alarm.com turn off all alerts from indoor cameras when your security system is disarmed.

You can also set up triggered video alerts for specific events. If you want to see your kids arrive home after school, for example, you can have Alarm.com send you a video clip from your hallway camera when they unlock the front door every day.

3: Get better crime prevention features.

When it comes to crime prevention, our cameras are more than a deterrent. As part of your smart security system, Alarm.com-powered cameras "team up" with other security devices to help you solve your security challenges.

4: Invest in security cameras that keep getting smarter.

Security camera technology gets better every year. Some manufacturers expect you to replace your cameras frequently to keep up. We don't. Instead, we release new features and services digitally, using our platform to keep your cameras up-to-date longer.

Take our new video analytics service. It uses artificial intelligence to make sense of what your cameras see, in real time. It can tell whether an object in your driveway is a person, an animal or a vehicle. It can ignore a person who visits your front door and then leaves (the mailman) but alerts you when a visitor lingers too long on your porch.

Industry experts praised it not just for its smarter video alerts, but also for working with our most popular indoor and outdoor cameras. If you're interested in activating video analytics, contact VTX1 Companies to learn about camera compatibility and service plan options.

5: Professional installation and support makes it easy.

Have you ever installed security cameras? VTX1 makes this part easy. We can help you choose the best cameras for each area of your home, then install and connect your cameras quickly and cleanly for you. Should anything go wrong with a camera after installation, we'll be on hand with the tools and know-how to fix the issue.

Want Alarm.com-powered security cameras for your home?

The best home security cameras can be part of the package when you choose smart home security powered by Alarm.com. It's the easy way to enjoy smart home technology and keep your family protected. Call VTX1 Companies today at **1-800-446-2031** or visit our website at **www.vtx1.net** to learn more.

Happy **67th** Birthday, **VTX1 COMPANIES!**

      Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc. was established in 1952 and continues to proudly serve South Texas today as VTX1 Companies. On April 22, 2019, we celebrated our company's 67th Anniversary with balloons, cake and lots of fun activities!

      Festivities were held at our Raymondville headquarters and at all of our business locations throughout South Texas. A good time was had by all!

Raymondville HQ

Lasara

Dilley

Raymondville 480

Falfurrias

Seguin

Jourdanton

George West

Dia de los Niños – Mirando City

Better Business Bureau Award Luncheon – Weslaco

Loaves and Fishes Annual Fashion Show – Harlingen

Falfurrias Watermelon Festival

Region 1 ESC Technology Conference – SPI

Willacy County Young Farmers Fishing Tournament – Port Mansfield

Ranch Rodeo – Raymondville

Atascosa - McMullen Special Olympics

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