Connected

SANTEL COMMUNICATIONS

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Hohn Retires After 30 Years

After 30 years of service to Santel Communications, Outside Plant Technician Mark Hohn is retiring.
For three decades, Mark has been part of the Santel story in a way few people can truly understand. He has worked through some of the biggest changes this industry has ever seen, from the early days of internet service in South Dakota to the fully fiber-optic network Santel members rely on today. Mark serviced the Southern District, which covers Ethan, Dimock, Parkston, Tripp and all the rural area in-between, a stretch of country he knows well.

When Mark started at Santel, the work looked a lot different than it does today. Phone service was still the foundation of the business. Internet was just beginning to change how people lived and worked. He faced adverse weather, long days, hard repairs, and plenty of changes in equipment, technology, and expectations. Mark has had a front-row seat to that entire transformation, and more importantly, he helped build and maintain it.

One story that stands out is the blizzard of '97. Back then, two-wheel drive pickups were standard issue for us. That winter was so bad that crews struggled to get around. Mark recalled spending more time getting pulled out than working. Safe to say four-wheel drive pickups were a welcome change the next year! Sometimes progress comes from new technology. Sometimes it comes from a South Dakota winter making its point the hard way. That story feels fitting for Mark's career. He has been part of the practical, hands-on side of progress. Progress that stems from overcoming adversity. Mark is not a "spotlight" guy. I know he will not be thrilled that I wrote an entire article about him. But after 30 years of service, some things need to be said.

Mark represents a generation of telecom workers who helped connect rural communities through one of the fastest-changing periods in communication history. He is one of those last "telecom frontier cowboys," the kind of person who could adapt from old systems to new ones, solve problems in the field, and keep people connected without making a big production out of it. Replacing that kind of experience is not easy. Thirty years of knowledge, stories, relationships, and problem-solving does not simply walk out the door without being felt. Mark is personable, knowledgeable, and simply a great human being. After only a year of working with him, I know I will miss him. I can only imagine how much his longtime coworkers and the members he has served over the years will feel his absence.

As Mark steps into retirement, his plan is to spend more time ranching cattle with his son, Sutton. Knowing Mark, he will take that on the same way he has taken on everything else: with hard work, and a smile.
On behalf of Santel Communications, thank you, Mark, for 30 years of dedication, service, and hard work. Thank you for helping build and maintain the network our members depend on. Thank you for the miles driven (forward and in reverse), the problems solved, the storms worked through, and the legacy you forged along the way.
- Weston Frank

With mail delivery becoming less predictable, Santel's mobile app and eBill options are a quick, easy, and free way to view and pay your bill without waiting on the mail.

Not interested in automatic ACH payments? No problem. You can still make one-time payments through the app whenever it works best for you. Going paperless also helps your cooperative save on printing and postage costs, especially for bills that often go unopened anyway. It's a small switch that saves time, reduces clutter, and helps keep cooperative resources working where they matter most.

Need help getting started? Give us a call or TEXT us at 605-796-4411.

Tips & Tricks: SmartStream Amazon Firestick

1. Jump to a Channel
In the guide, press and hold the center button on your Fire TV remote to enter a channel number and jump right to it.

2. Search for a Show
Open Search from the menu to look for live shows, upcoming programs, or available content. You can type or use the voice button on your remote.

3. Restart Live TV
If you see the green restart icon, you can start the current program from the beginning. Availability may vary by channel or program.

4. View Recent Channels
Press the ☰ button while watching TV to see recently viewed channels and quickly switch back.

Save the Date: Santel Annual Meeting Returns to the Woonsocket Gym

Santel's Annual Meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 16, 2026. After the wonderful attendance in 2025, this years meeting will be held at the Woonsocket School Gym.

Eligible members will receive official invitations in early September with additional meeting details.

This year, there will be two eligible seats opening on the Santel Board of Directors:

Central District Seat
This seat is currently held by Pam Moore.
Any active Santel member in the Artesian, Forestburg, Letcher, or Mount Vernon exchanges is eligible to run for this seat.

At-Large Seat
This seat is currently held by Kent Swenson.
Any active Santel member from any Santel exchange is eligible to run for this seat.

Members interested in running for a seat on the Santel Board of Directors should contact the Santel office at 605-796-4411 or info@santel.coop to obtain a petition.

Petitions must be signed by at least 15 active members of the territory the candidate would serve. Completed petitions must be turned in to the Santel billing office, located at 308 S Dumont Ave, Woonsocket, SD, no later than 5:00 PM on August 17, 2026.

New Telephone Lines:

Alpena
Anderson, Wesley
605-849-4547

Huron
Wipf, Delila
605-599-2914

Mt. Vernon
Wadleigh, Shawn
605-236-5245

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