k w o m

FALL 2003 NEWSLETTER

WIRELESS BROADBAND – KWOM is deploying high-speed fixed wireless service in rural areas west of Chicago, starting with the Somonauk/Leland/Earlville area in LaSalle county. Don't confuse this with a "wireless hotspot" or "WiFi". The business-class fixed wireless equipment we use can provide fast, reliable, secure Internet service to customers up to 10 miles from the tower site. We can also provide service to customers along the Fox River using a network of tower sites operated by other ISPs.

DNS CHANGE – In June we changed IP addresses for most of our network, in order to use IP address space allocated directly to us from ARIN rather than blocks delegated from backbone providers. Our DNS servers have new IP addresses, and we have added a new, higher performance DNS server. Most customers are set up to obtain the DNS server addresses automatically every time they connect, so no change is needed.

But you may have these addresses manually configured on your computers or networking equipment if you share an Internet connection across your local area network, or if you have an extremely old Macintosh (early OS7). We are continuing to run DNS servers at the old IP addresses, but if you have them manually configured, you should change to:

primary DNS server: 69.49.192.2
secondary DNS server: 69.49.193.2

MULTIPLE LOGIN ACCOUNTS – One of the advantages of dialup (modem) Internet access is that you can use your account from any computer with access to a phoneline. A standard account however is limited to one connection at a time – you can't log in from multiple phonelines simultaneously. If you are having to call your family to tell them to log off the Internet so you can connect from work, you may need a multiple login account. We can upgrade your account to allow 2 simultaneous logins, the cost is 50% more than a standard single login account.

TIPS FROM TECH SUPPORT

WHAT EMAIL SOFTWARE SHOULD I USE? – The most popular email software is Microsoft Outlook Express (OE), distributed as part of Internet Explorer (IE) for both PC and Mac. Microsoft has announced it will stop developing new features for OE, hoping that consumers will buy Microsoft Office to get Outlook, or that they will switch to Microsoft's services MSN and Hotmail. Microsoft is also stopping development on the Mac version of OE, now that Apple has its own web browser, Safari.

While Outlook is good for business users with support from an IT department, it is complex and frustrating for the typical user. Actually we doubt there were many new features in the OE pipeline anyway (and if they are like the awful Attachment Blocking feature, who wants them?) OE should continue to be a good choice for the foreseeable future as long as Microsoft continues to issue security patches.

AOL, which has owned Netscape for several years, recently announced that it will stop development on Netscape 7. Again, we don't believe there were many features in the pipeline, so if you are using Netscape 7 or considering upgrading from a previous version, it should be fine for at least a few years.

A surprising number of people continue to use Netscape Communicator 4.7, even though it is almost 5 years old, and many websites are partially or totally nonfunctional when viewed in Navigator. Most PC users should upgrade to Internet Explorer/Outlook Express 6. Most Mac users should upgrade to either Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, or to Netscape 7, unless they have OSX (Jaguar) in which case we recommend Apple's Safari and Mail.

There are other choices, notably Eudora from Qualcomm available at http://www.eudora.com/download. Eudora has downloads for Windows, Mac OS8.6 – 9.x, and Mac OSX. The licensed version costs $39.95 for full features, tech support, and no ads. Or you can use the Lite or Sponsored version free. If you want to try out Eudora, we recommend you download the Sponsored version (the ads are not very intrusive) and if you like it, pay $39.95 for a license to eliminate the ads. Eudora is known for being more well-behaved than OE or Netscape, and making it easier to do things like view message headers.

ARE YOU MY SERVER? – Occasionally we get a call asking "you are my server, right?" Usually this is followed by "I got an error message saying the server is not responding. Why are you not responding?"

Actually, "server" usually means a computer somewhere on the Internet. There are many kinds of servers – access servers connect you to the Internet, DNS servers look up IP addresses, mailservers handle email, webservers host websites, etc.

If you connect to the Internet through KWOM, you use our access servers and probably our DNS servers. If you have an email account with us, you use our mailservers. But if your web browser says "the server is not responding", the problem is probably at the webserver hosting the website (or you may have mistyped the URL). If your email software says the server is not responding, the problem may be your antivirus or firewall software blocking traffic to/from the mailserver.

So while we are your Internet Service Provider (ISP), we are not responsible for all "server" errors.

TOO MANY POSTINI NOTIFICATIONS – Our Postini spam/virus filtering service has proved very popular. Some people however prefer not to be notified that a virus was blocked or that they have quarantined junk mail. Since the default setting is to send a notification every time a virus is blocked, the prolific Sobig.F virus outbreak in August caused some people to receive dozens of notifications per day. You can log into Postini at login.postini.com and change your setting to a maximum of one virus notification per day, or we will be happy to do it for you. We can also disable all Postini notifications.

Note that Postini is an optional, premium service that costs $1/month. Call or email us to subscribe.

DO I NEED ANTIVIRUS SOFTWARE? – If you have a Windows PC, you should buy AV software and update the virus definitions weekly. You should also run Windows Update regularly and install any critical security patches. Most Macintosh owners rely on the fact that very few viruses target Macs, but it wouldn't hurt to install AV software. The leading AV software is Norton Antivirus 2003 from Symantec, another good choice is McAfee VirusScan.

DO I NEED A FIREWALL? – If you have a broadband connection, we highly recommend using private IP addresses and a NAT router. This will protect against attacks like the Blaster worm. For dialup customers, we do block access to the TCP port that was targeted by Blaster and we are not aware of any KWOM customers who were infected.

We have mixed feelings about software "firewalls". If you have the technical expertise to configure them and interpret their alerts, they will provide an extra measure of protection. Be aware however that software firewalls may alert you to harmless events, and may even interfere with normal functions such as sending/receiving email, downloading files, initiating telnet sessions, performing ping tests, etc.

Microsoft includes a firewall with Windows XP, but you may need to enable it for your dialup connection. There are many vendors of third party "personal firewall" software, the most popular is probably Zone Alarm from Zone Labs.

OUTLOOK EXPRESS CAN'T SEND MAIL – If you send an email with an illegal recipient address, Outlook Express will keep it in the Outbox and complain every time you do a Send/Receive. Click on Outbox in your folder list, then highlight the offending email in the message list and delete it.

YOUR SERVER HAS UNEXPECTEDLY TERMINATED THE CONNECTION – You may occasionally see an error message like this if you have antivirus software screening your outgoing mail, and Outlook Express is configured to hang up after send/receive. Outlook Express sends the email to your antivirus software, and then hangs up the dialup connection before the antivirus software can scan the email and forward it to the mailserver. In Outlook Express, click Options from the Tools menu, and in the Connection menu remove the checkmark from "Hang up after sending and receiving".

IS IT A LOCAL CALL? – KWOM has dialup access numbers throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. None are faster or better than the others, and you won't get a busy signal on any of them – the only consideration is whether your phone company considers it a local call for billing purposes. If your phone company is SBC, you can verify your local calling area at www.sbc.com/localcalling.

Note that back issues of the KWOM newsletter are available in the Support section of our website.