

Fee or Free?

You Don't Have to Pay for Internet Access

I have to think that by now, most of us are on the Internet in some way or another. You might just browse around, visit our great Web site (www.magcs.org), purchase items online for your course, check up on your favorite sports teams and of course, retrieve and send e-mail. Whatever you use the Internet to do, I would bet that you pay between \$6 and \$20 per month for access. Then again, some courses have the superintendent hooked up for free. If that is your case, then don't read the rest of this. If not—read on!

Why are the free ISPs giving Internet access away, you might ask? Naturally, it's all for the almighty buck. You don't have to pay a monthly fee, but these ISPs are banking on the fact that you visit the sites that advertise with them.

Many Internet service providers (ISPs) exist that do not ask for any fee. The only obligation you fulfill to get service from such an ISP is to fill out an online questionnaire. Then, while you are online, an advertising banner will appear on the top or bottom of your screen. Some think this is annoying. So are commercials during football games. It's the same concept, except—since you filled out the questionnaire before you got online—the banner ads are actually aimed at your interests.

Why are the free ISPs giving Internet access away, you might ask? Naturally, it's all for the almighty buck. You don't have to pay a monthly fee, but these ISPs are banking on the fact that you visit the sites that advertise with them. Every time you actually click on a banner ad, you are sent to that site. Every time you do that, that advertiser pays the ISP. It costs you nothing to visit advertisers, unless you want to purchase whatever they have to offer. Then you are on your own.

You can take advantage of additional perks when you use free ISPs. Some have a recurring banner ad that you can customize. I use this space for local weather, sports scores for only the teams in which I am interested, and current news. If you see a news or sports story that intrigues you, just click that and you jump to that news/sports story. Plus, all of this happens in real time. You can't get more up-to-the-minute than that.

What about free e-mail? The old standby in free e-mail is Juno. Juno's weakness is that the freebie is only e-mail. You still have to pay

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for Internet service. All of the ISPs mentioned herein have a free e-mail service attached to them.

On the topic of e-mail, two types of e-mail are in the offing these days. One is the usual type, where you download and upload your mail from a server. The server holds the mail only until you retrieve it. Then you have the only copy of it. It is erased from the server's memory. The other e-mail is called Web-based e-mail. This type holds the e-mail in a remote server and you access it from your PC. The advantage of this type of e-mail is significant—you can access it from anywhere and from any PC. Let's say you use your computer at home and at work. If you use a traditional e-mail server, when you download your mail while you're at work, it is written to your hard drive and is erased from the server. If you want to access that e-mail from your home

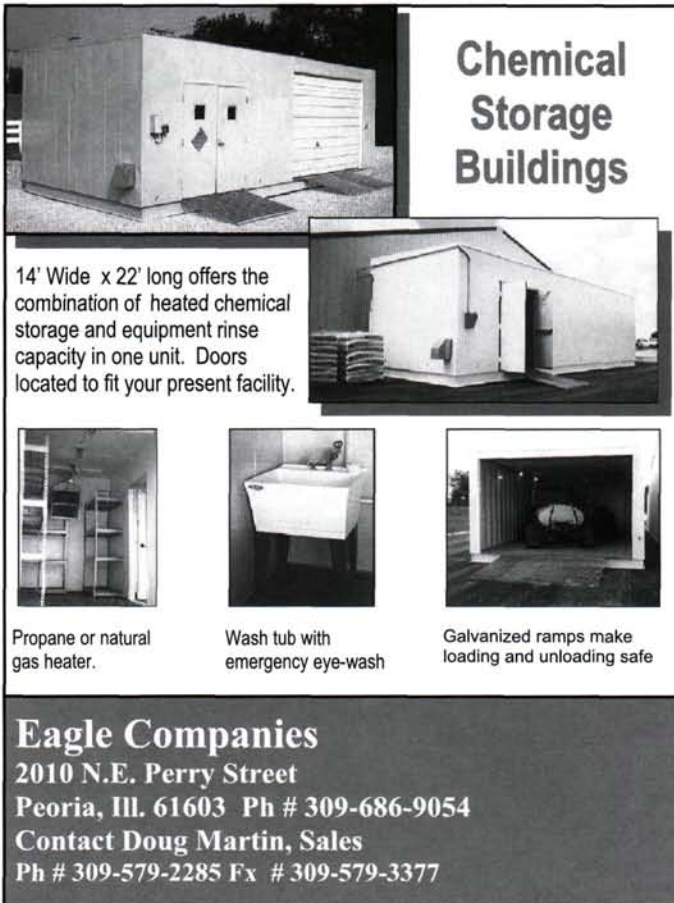
computer, you can't. It is not on the server anymore. It's on your hard drive in your office. Also, Web based e-mail does not require you to have any special software to read it, like Microsoft Outlook or Netscape's e-mail attachment to Netscape Navigator.

So, how can you investigate these free ISPs and find out if it might work for you? The next time you're online, go to one of these Web sites: www.netzero.com, www.altavista.com, www.freeweb.com, www.bluelight.com. Follow the instructions on how to download software and how to get online. It can't hurt to try them, and you might just decide to dump the fee you are currently paying. If you have any questions or want any tips, e-mail me at nickh27@hotmail.com. Happy surfing!



for the day. We happened to have six commercial sponsors that month for a total of \$2,100. Without that sponsorship money, the meeting would have cost each of the 148 players who played that day nearly \$15 more.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has responded favorably to the services and amenities that we as an Association are trying to provide. We learn as we grow. It is thanks to the never-ending participation and cooperation of our membership that we have become so successful. Speaking of which, we still need host sites for our 2001 meetings. There goes that harp again!

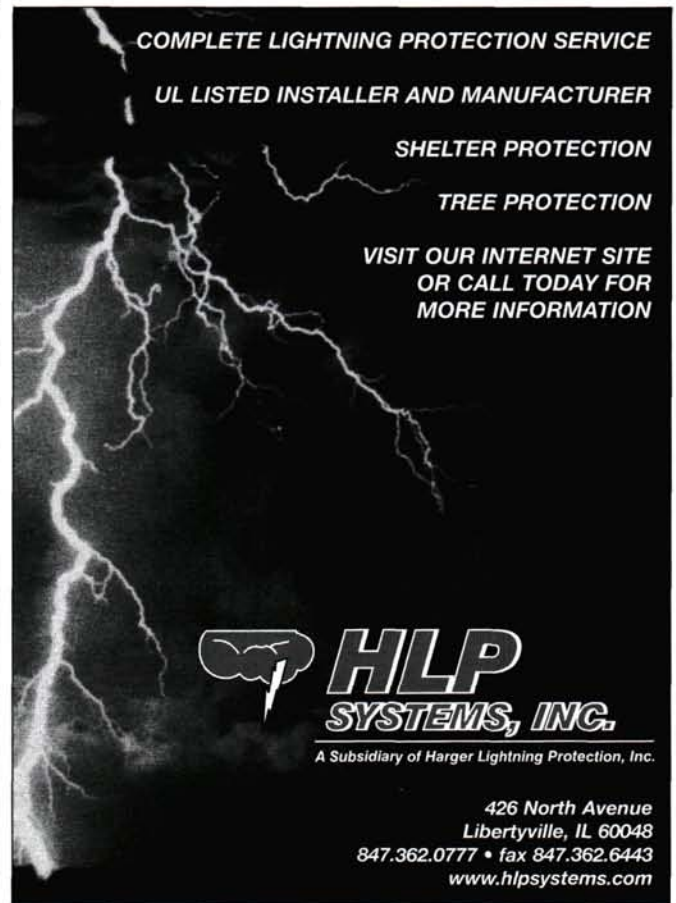



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