

DAMAGE PREVENTION PROFESSIONAL INVITES YOU TO SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT EXCAVATION SAFETY AND DAMAGE PREVENTION, AND WE WILL HAVE THEM ANSWERED BY A PROFESSIONAL WORKING IN AN APPROPRIATE AREA OF THE INDUSTRY. SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: **ASK THE DP PRO**, DAMAGE PREVENTION PROFESSIONAL, 10740 LYNDALE AVENUE SOUTH, SUITE 15W, BLOOMINGTON, MN 55420 OR EMAIL TO **MICHELE@EMAILIR.COM**.

Q Why should I worry about having a communications cable located? Even if I do cut it, it's not like anyone is going to get hurt.

A By Andrew Heins

I vividly remember one of the first interactions I had with a farmer digging around a fiber optic cable, well intentioned in his reconstruction of damaged drain tile. However, he was profoundly unaware of the pending disaster he could have imparted on his community.

It occurred to me while explaining to him, that had he gone much further before I stopped his project, he very likely would have disrupted 911 communications, landline voice and wireless service for a multi-tower region, and impaired ring integrity for a statewide fiber network. When he asked the obvious question of repair costs, I suggested that he could plan on leaving his entire rig where it was for a down payment. Now that was a bit of an exaggeration, but it captured his attention and had the intended effect of receiving a lot more One Call tickets from local farmers.

For many, a cut in a communications cable may seem a less significant dig up event compared to one involving a gas or power line, due to the fact imminent personnel safety might not be at risk in the case of the cable cut. So what are the impacts of a fiber cable cut beyond the act of physical

restoration, and what is the cost of that repair?

Let's start with impacts to wired and wireless services as both would be impacted by the fiber cut. In an ever-connected world, daily life and workflow is disrupted for the average consumer, commerce stops for the brick and mortar store as well as the online retailer, ATMs may not function and, unless you have cash, a gas pump just became a hassle.

The potential for the most serious impact is the loss of 911 circuits and connections to other critical community services that may be severed. Incidentally, the individual responsible for the damage may have impacted their own ability to communicate for business or call in the cut cable.

Service Level Agreement (SLA) violation penalties for services traversing the cut fiber cable range in cost depending on the provider and the service disrupted. SLA agreements typically require restoration within a narrow window (2-4 hours) with a penalty of a forfeiture of a single month's contract revenue, or it can be a fixed dollar amount beginning at \$1,000-\$2,000 per hour, escalating to higher amounts the longer the duration of the outage. Compounding the financial impact to the provider with the cut cable is that the fiber cable cut more than likely carries multiple carriers, each assessing their own SLA penalties to the provider.

The more apparent issue and costs at hand, which can be more concretely measured, are the true costs to fix a cut fiber cable. In general, the following components are going to be a part of the cost and can impact the time to repair; and let's hope the weather and ground conditions are ideal.

- Mobilization fee
- Trenching/Digging/Plowing/Boring
- Material & Labor
- Splicing costs
- Provider onsite management costs

Restoration costs will vary based on location conditions and fiber size, but for discussion purposes let's assume a 48 fiber was cut. Restoration costs can easily run \$7,500 - \$10,000 for emergency restoration of the cut cable. In the case of a larger cable, such as a 144 fiber, restoration costs can easily escalate to more than \$15,000 due to increased fiber splicing.

All in all, the seemingly minor orange paint on the ground, often discounted in importance, just became one of the most important reminders of the impact a cut communications cable can have on our everyday lives. **DP**

Andrew Heins serves as Senior Consultant of the Broadband Division for Finley Engineering (www.FinleyUSA.com). Mr. Heins is a veteran of the telecommunications industry and brings valuable insight in the areas of communications company operations, FTTH network design and operation, industry revenue practices, and industry regulation. He can be reached at a.heins@fecinc.com.

CGA
Common Ground Alliance

DIRT

Damage Information Reporting Tool

FACTS

- > "Locating Practices Not Sufficient" is made of several root causes. **Facility Marking or Location Not Sufficient** is the most common (69%) followed by **Facility Not Located or Marked** (19%)
- > Of the 1,375 events occurring on federal land, 97% were not preceded by a locate request
- > The locating and marking performance of Utility Locators has seen significant change from 2013 to 2014. Of the 10% of submitted events by Utility Locators in 2014, the **Mark's Visibility** (74% vs. 78%) and the **Mark's Accuracy** (74% vs. 80%) have decreased in 2014.

WANT TO KNOW MORE? THIS INFORMATION WAS EXCERPTED FROM THE DIRT ANNUAL REPORT 2014. ACCESS THE ENTIRE REPORT AT **WWW.CGA-DIRT.COM**.