

Vandals Cut AT&T's Major Fiber Cable in Ukiah – AT&T Quickly Restored All Services

Overview

On the morning of Thursday, September 3, 2015, vandals possibly in search of fiber severed a major interoffice fiber cable that connects Central Offices and is located just south of Ukiah. The damage affected services for a number of wireline and wireless customers in portions of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties. Following AT&T's protocols for monitoring and responding to outages, 911 Call Centers affected by the fiber cable cut were quickly identified and inbound calls were rerouted at the direction of each call center until services were restored.

AT&T work crews overcame significant obstacles posed by the remote location of the damage, including cold weather and the presence of rattle snakes, working through the night to minimize the duration and impact of the outage to the communities we serve. All wireline services were restored in just over 24 hours, Friday morning, while wireless service restoral was completed by mid-afternoon the same day at about 2:30 PM.

Impacts

The fiber cable cut outage affected wireline services in Mendocino and Humboldt Counties. Two remote switches were isolated in the outage: Hopland and Eureka. Customers in these two areas had dial tone but could only make and receive calls within their respective local switching areas – there was no inbound or outbound calling beyond the respective local areas, including calls to 911. The Hopland switch was restored at 9:55 PM on Thursday and the Eureka switch was restored at 8:45 AM on Friday.

The Mendocino County Sheriff, Ukiah Police Department, and Willits Police Department were temporarily isolated from the 911 network from 25 minutes to one and a half hours. Within 25 minutes of the outage, AT&T began to implement reroute solutions for calls to these call centers, sending 911 calls to Cal Fire in Willits. Customers had dial tone and could make all inbound/outbound calls but did not have access to 911 calling from the time of the fiber cable cut (9:40 AM) until reroutes were in place (between 10:05 AM and 11:10 AM).

The outage impacted AT&T Mobility's wireless customers in Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties. Callers would have experienced degraded or no service.

Restoration

AT&T's restoration efforts started when alarms at AT&T's operation center identified heavy impact related to a fiber optic cable cut at 9:40 AM on Thursday, September 3, 2015. By 10:45 AM, initial field crews were dispatched to investigate and by 4:55 PM the specific outage location was found. The cable cut occurred in a remote area south of Ukiah that is difficult to reach. The nearest road to the area is a twenty to thirty minute walk away. Technicians teamed up with a local fire department's railroad trolley operator, who used the adjacent railway to haul in power generators, fiber fusing machines, building cases for splicing, a backhoe, and all the new fiber that would be needed for repairs.

With the necessary equipment in place the crew began splicing the 96 fibers of the severed cable and worked through the night using light and power from generators while fending off against rattle snakes and without any space heaters. By sunrise the following morning, the crew had restored most services

and a relief crew arrived to complete the remaining work. The fibers serving 911 call centers were prioritized for splicing and complete restoral of wireline services was accomplished about 24 hours after the outage. Impacted wireless services were fully restored later that day Friday by mid-afternoon at about 2:30 PM.

Historic analysis of AT&T's network in Mendocino and Humboldt Counties shows it performs at a high level, providing consistently reliable service over the years. From January through December 2014, AT&T received an average of only 2 trouble reports per 100 lines served by AT&T in the two counties, which is well within the CPUC's guidelines. We see similar results in 2015. Additionally, the network is continually evolving with new fiber routes that, whenever possible, are able to utilize spare capacity to backup preexisting routes. As a result, some of our facilities are routed with greater pathway diversity than others and, consequently, some customers experience greater protections against damages to our network than others. In rare instances, customers with large facilities in need of a greater level of service protection will purchase local access or end-to-end route diversity offerings where available.

Vandalism

Acts of vandalism and attempted copper theft are an unfortunate reality communications companies face and which AT&T works closely with police authorities to manage. Tampering with phone networks is a violation of federal and state laws and AT&T is cooperating with law enforcement agencies to identify and punish offenders. This is a serious matter that affects public safety and the community at large. AT&T is offering up to a \$50,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for this attempted copper theft or other vandalism near Ukiah.