

Know Thine Enemy – What Happens When A Fiber is Cut?

Nobody likes an outage, least of all us. Outages can be caused by any number of things (hey it's electronics, except the squirrel chews). Stuff does break. If you follow us on [Facebook](#) or check [the outage section](#), from time to time, you'll hear us talk about a fiber cut. What does that mean? Fiber is a thread of glass through which light travels carrying internet bandwidth (the raw material you need to access the internet), that is much thinner than the lightest fishing line you own. A lot of those little tiny threads are bundled together into a little plastic tube the width of a plastic coffee stirrer or a cocktail straw then a bunch of those are wrapped into plastic casing around a half of an inch in diameter. Miles and miles of these lines are either attached to utility poles or buried several feet underground in conduit, usually orange.



No doubt you've seen little locate flags along the side of the road sticking out of the ground. They're all over. The little flags have been placed there because someone is planning on digging in that area. Companies that have existing buried lines enjoying a quiet and peaceful existence in the good earth in those flagged areas are required to let the companies that are planning on doing underground work know that "hey we're down here". Public enemy number one is the construction crew that ignores the locate flags or just makes a mistake and "steers" a backhoe through the line severing the little threads of glass.

To repair it requires the owner of the line to use equipment that shoots a light beam through the miles of glass to identify the physical location of the break. Then trucks and equipment are deployed to the site (Is it ever nearby? NO!), the site is excavated, and line is pulled up so that the technician can identify the teeny little broken thread or threads. The tech then uses another piece of gear to "splice" the good ends of the fiber back together by literally melting them together. It's never just one broken thread either. This process takes hours and it doesn't happen indoors. We once experienced a customer chewing deep into our backside claiming that surely a conspiracy existed and that there was no way that it could take six to eight hours or more to repair a fiber cut. Oh well, a person convinced against their will is unconvinced still.

These things happen. But in the case of commZoom and no other provider that we know of, when we know this has occurred, we post the matter on our website and on social media as fast as we can. Our zoomCrew on the phones are alerted as are our after-hours staffing. On social media and our website's service outage page, we'll give a play-by-play on what we know to be happening with

the repair in as close to real time as we can get. That way our customers can know what is going on. We've found that eliminates some stress. We don't often give an estimate on the time we expect for the problem to be solved because there are way too many things affecting that. This process doesn't solve the issue, but you should know that this is the best way to track the matter rather than trying to get an open phone line to call in when the phones are the busiest. As your writer is also the person who has written most of those outage update posts including from the side of the road at midnight in the rain or from a duck blind in Aransas Bay, it can be said with confidence that this is the most up to the minute info available to you and is an example of the "Main Street Merchant Quality" service that commZoom® strives to deliver every day.