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Island-Wide Viya Outage Caused by Property Owner Digging Hole; Viya Urges Swift Establishment of 'Call Before You Dig' Notification Center

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Example of fiber cable cut, not the Viya incident.

ST. CROIX — The island-wide communications outage that affected Viya on Wednesday on St. Croix was caused by a landowner who was drilling holes along property line and utility easement of the roadway, Viya made known through a release Thursday. The landowner unknowingly cut the company's fiber optic cables which led to a communications blackout.

The outage affected TV, phone and internet services Wednesday, with various service outages lasting almost the entire day for some customers.

Viya saw the disruption of its services as yet another reason for the VI government to implement the "[Call Before You Dig](#)" law, established in 2015, which requires communication before such digging occurs.

"This incident highlights the criticality of a Call Before You Dig Notification Center," Viya said. "Had the landowner notified the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (DPW) of its activities, Viya would have had the opportunity to indicate the presence of its cable and this incident could have been avoided. Viya believes in collaborating with DPW and other stakeholders to proceed with all due haste to establish the Notification Center so that the community may avoid future incidents and better serve Virgin Island residents."

The incident occurred two days following a Senate hearing on Monday where the territory's utility companies agreed to collaborate in ascertaining such mistakes don't happen. The Viya disruption cost the firm money and disrupted the workflow of businesses and individuals, even as internet service has become more indelible to everyday life and work because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking to the Consortium Thursday, Jennifer Matarangas-king, vice president of public relations and government affairs at Viya, said it was time for the law to be implemented, and said the Dept. of Public Works has been working with Viya and other stakeholders to make it happen. She said most states have statutes that call for communication before work can be done that could impact cables.

Viya thanked its customers for their patience "during this avoidable service interruption, which affected thousands of subscribers." The company said it will be issuing automatic out-of-service credits to affected customers on next month's bill.

The network is now fully restored, said Viya. If, however, customers in the previously affected areas still do not have connectivity, our team is happy to help you at (340) 777-Viya (8492).