

## Cut cable limits Web access in three states

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Parts of Western Montana, Idaho and Wyoming lost or had diminished Internet service Tuesday after a fiber-optic cable was damaged along U.S. 93 north of Polson.

The cable was damaged by a Montana Department of Transportation crew that was installing signs near a new roadside rest area, according to Kim Valiquette, a spokeswoman for CenturyTel in La Crosse, Wis.

"They were placing signs and they accidentally severed the fiber-optic cable," Valiquette said. "It did take out our Internet in quite a few areas. It did affect customers in Idaho and Wyoming as well as in Montana."

The incident occurred Tuesday morning and it took CenturyTel technicians some time to locate the damage, Valiquette said.

She said service in some areas, including Kalispell, was slowed significantly rather than completely knocked out.

Many Kalispell Internet users were switched to a secondary fiber system that was recently installed as a separate link by [Montanasky.net](http://Montanasky.net), according to Fred Weber, chairman and founder of the Northwest Montana Internet service provider.

"Our customers aren't affected because [service] goes on our own fiber to Seattle on a completely different route out of here," Weber said.

Valiquette urged people to make use of a "Call before you dig" service that provides information on buried utilities. The service can be reached by calling "811."

Valiquette said the cable was expected to be repaired by Tuesday evening.