

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Broadband Bandits: Industry Looks for Infrastructure Security

Theft and vandalism aren't trends that have appeared from thin air, but there's a growing urgency among those in telecommunications to address how much crime has impacted the infrastructure and equipment that keep networks online. Between June and December of last year, there were 5,770 reported incidents of intentional theft and/or vandalism targeting communications infrastructure, according to **NCTA's** updated vandalism report.

The issue is so hot that telecom industry leaders from **NCTA**, **CTIA**, **WIA**, **Charter**, **Verizon** and **AT&T** gathered this week at **Charter's** office in St. Louis for the inaugural Telecom Industry Summit, with an aim of protecting the nation's critical infrastructure.

NCTA's report found an average of 824 incidents of theft or vandalism per month or 27 per day across the U.S., collectively affecting over 1.5 million customers while costing providers millions in repairs. Ten states accounted for 93% of the reported incidents over that same period, with California (1,805) and Texas (1,113) alone making up over half of the cases.

Copper is often a target as its market value climbs amid increasing global demand. In November, for example, **Lumen** had 69 cases of line cutting since the start of 2024, including an incident that halted services at an airport in Bemerton, Washington, in addition to a local prison. Those thefts cost Lumen \$500,000.

But it's not just copper that's getting attention from saboteurs. "Speaking specifically to the wireless industry, when we asked our members about their vandalism challenges ...

some of the key and most significant exposures that they mentioned were theft and vandalism of cell site batteries, cell site engineering equipment and overall site sabotage or wireless cell towers, and also small cell sites as well," CTIA Assistant VP, Legislative Affairs *Jeremy Crandall* said during the Summit. He mentioned fiber-optic transmission lines being another target, despite not containing copper.

The immediate impacts of these incidents can include power outages, water and sewage service disruptions and emergency service interference, not to mention potential national security threats that could arise. However, there are longer-term effects that come in the forms of lost productivity due to business operations being delayed, troubleshooting and truck rolls costing millions of dollars and the expenses that come with repair and restoration.

There's good news for companies hoping communications theft and vandalism get proper attention soon. While some states still don't have a criminal statute specific to damaging critical or communications infrastructure, others are turning up the heat. In March, Kentucky was the first state in the 2025 legislative session to pass a law that improves definitions and increases penalties for communications theft. Alabama, Kansas and Montana each rolled out their own legislation last week, and other states like Iowa continue to ponder whether to institute updated measures.

"It's our view that these penalties need to be increased in order to further deter criminal activity," *Kuper Jones*, NCTA's Senior Director, State and External Affairs, said. "Ultimately,

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if these types of policy changes are implemented, it should help get law enforcement the tools they need for investigating and prosecuting these criminals.”

But the effort can't only come within the telecom industry. Jones, as well as **USTelecom** VP, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships *Lynn Follansbee*, called for more collaboration between the industry and law enforcement to better trace stolen materials, also noting the need for regulators to be educated on the issue as well as potential solutions. There are also non-policy-related efforts that some have taken, such as the Los Angeles Police Department and its Copper Wire Task Force. In its first six months after being created, the group made 82 arrests while recovering more than 2,000 pounds of copper wire. Sixty of those 82 arrests were for felony crimes.

“We really need coordination and collaboration, and that includes our industry, the scrap metal industry, municipalities, law enforcement and policymakers,” Follansbee said. “We just really need to make sure that we get a consistent and serious effort coordinated moving forward so that this doesn't keep happening.”

FCC GETS A BLAST OF COMMENTS ON LOUD COMMERCIALS

One of the first dockets *Brendan Carr* opened as **FCC** Chair was on whether updates are needed to protect consumers from loud commercials, and there seems to be differing opinions from viewers and industry. With comments due this week in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, dozens of consumers took time to say that ads are too loud. “While some may need to increase the volume to better hear programming, commercials that are intentionally loud at the outset—even if technically compliant with the current standard—can be jarring and unpleasant for everyone,” said a letter from the **Hearing Loss Association of America** (HLA). The group urged the FCC to simplify the process for reporting violations of the CALM Act, the 2010 law that requires broadcast stations and MVPDs to apply standards to ensure that ads have the same average volume as programming. HLA also suggested MVPDs should have the ability to limit exposure to overly loud commercials much like how it offers parental controls. While the FCC said it was initiating the proceeding because of an uptick in complaints (1,700 last year compared to 750 in 2022), **NCTA** said its MVPD members have received few complaints. “One NCTA member received only one complaint over the last three years, and another received just 15 over the last four years,” NCTA said. “We therefore encourage the Commission to provide companies identified in the cited complaints with more information so that they can determine whether there is an increase in relevant complaints and investigate why. It is possible that

consumers have misidentified the source or cause of the loud commercial.” **NAB** said that an increasing number, and likely the majority, of consumer complaints about loud commercials appear to originate from streaming platforms and vMVPDs. It warned that the FCC should be careful not to impose additional regulatory burdens on broadcasters to address a problem that is largely caused by unregulated platforms. **The Streaming Video Alliance**, whose members include **Netflix**, **Max**, **Disney** and **Paramount+**, noted the FCC does not have authority to regulate volume matters on video streaming platforms and said imposing a volume standard could be unsustainably costly for many streaming providers, particularly given unique technical aspects. Unlike broadcasters, many commercials on online platforms are dynamically inserted by third-party ad networks, so streamers don't have direct control over the loudness level.

THE DOCTOR IS OUT

Liberty Media Chairman *John Malone* won't stand for re-election to **Warner Bros. Discovery's** board, transitioning to the role of Chair Emeritus, effective upon the expiration of his term at the 2025 annual meeting. Warner Bros. Discovery intends to nominate *Anton Levy* of private equity firm General Atlantic for election, which means the board will be comprised of 13 directors, 12 of whom will be independent. “As Chair Emeritus, John's unparalleled counsel, deep expertise, and clarity of vision will continue to shape our leadership team and Board's decisions as we unlock the full potential of our business. The partnership and friendship we've built over more than 30 years has been one of the true joys of my career, and I'm looking forward to continuing this journey with John in this new role,” said WBD President and CEO *David Zaslav*. Malone issued a statement saying the board and management team have made incredible progress making the company more resilient, agile and positioned for profitable growth. “A constant through this journey has been my long-standing partnership with David, built on deep trust and his powerful combination of operational excellence and decisive leadership,” he said.

COMCAST ADVERTISING CHANGES

Comcast Advertising is introducing a new Media Solutions unit to help streamline advertisers' ability to access its media assets. The new team will offer a single point of entry for Comcast Advertising's portfolio across local or national, traditional TV, streaming or multiscreen. With the move, Comcast Advertising is sunsetting its ad sales division **Effectv**, though some of Effectv's leadership landed new roles. Now heading up the U.S. media sales operations for Comcast Advertising

will be *Dawn Williamson* in the newly created role of CRO. *Gina Mingioni* will step in as COO and oversee media product and operations alongside existing duties for client experience and Comcast data. *Karen Babcock* will spend time looking at new inventory opportunities and strategic partnerships as Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Supply.

garnered 2.26 million viewers and peaked with 2.79 million, the most-watched program of the day across all TV among People and Males 18-34, 18-49 and under 50, in addition to the M25-54 demo.

RATINGS

We've been hearing a lot of buzz over **Max** original "The Pitt," and the numbers show why. The series just wrapped up its first season last night, averaging 10 million global viewers per episode. Every single ep since its two-part premiere on Jan. 9 has outperformed the last (and you'll see when the **Cablefax 100** magazine releases next week that several of our honorees are among those watching). – The highly anticipated return of Lakers star *Luka Doncic* to Dallas was the most-watched NBA game on **ESPN** this season, excluding Christmas. L.A.'s win

FIBER FRENZY

Shentel's Glo Fiber penned an agreement to deploy FTTH services to Dover Township and Dover Borough in York County, Pennsylvania. Construction is scheduled to begin later this year before the company welcomes 7,000 new homes and businesses into its footprint. Glo Fiber already includes 23,000 addresses throughout the county. – Antietam Broadband is ready to fly in Washington County, Maryland, after announcing plans to bring Flight Fiber to the area. The expansion will include Flight Mobile and Flight Video. Flight Fiber offers range from \$59.95/month for the Basic 250 Mbps tier to \$99.95/month for the Premium 2.3 Gbps plan.



CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits



Jim Maiella • 1st
EVP of Corporate Communications at AMC Networks
5h • 🌐

"When I look at our business, so much of what we do comes down to programming and partnerships. So, this year, we wanted to go a little bigger, a little broader and a little more expansive in terms of the people in the room and the ongoing conversation." - [Kristin Dolan](#), CEO of AMC Networks.

What an unforgettable night in NYC celebrating the shows, franchises, incredible talent, partners and brands that drive **AMC Networks**! Here's a snapshot of our 2025 Upfront Content Showcase. And, never forget, the real fun begins when Frendo comes out to play.



Grant Spellmeyer ✓
@GRANTatACA

I'm all in favor of a pole attachment discussion! @ACAConnects



Jeff Baumgartner @thebauminator • Apr 7

FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez on working in Washington these days...."frankly, very stressful" She's (jokingly) hoping for a week when the discourse is around pole attachments #nab2025

Quotable

"I am going to defer to my economists at this point, but I think [a recession is] a likely outcome... I always remind people, markets aren't always right, but sometimes they are right, and I think this time they are right because they're just pricing in uncertainty at the macro level and uncertainty at the micro level, the actual company level, and then how it affects consumer sentiment, it's hard to tell. Consumers still have jobs, wages are going up the low end, which I think is a good thing, but if companies start cutting back, the consumer sentiment changes, and business sentiment changes."

- **JPMorgan Chase Chairman/CEO Jamie Dimon** on **FOX Business** "Mornings with Maria"



Up Ahead

APRIL 16-17: [Pennsylvania Broadband Summit](#); Gettysburg, PA

APRIL 27-29: [NCTA 2025 Legislative and Policy Conference](#); Washington, D.C.

APRIL 24: [2025 Cable Hall of Fame](#); NYC

APRIL 28-MAY 1: [CableLabs Interop Labs CPMP XGS-PON](#); Louisville, CO

MAY 6: [The WICT Network Signature Awards Luncheon](#); Los Angeles

MAY 16: [Extended Deadline for 2025 FAXIES](#)