

October 19, 2026

AT&T Protects Ohio's Connections from Copper Theft

by David Lewis, President, AT&T Ohio

AT&T is engineering a more connected future, delivering advanced connectivity that's reliable, fast and future-ready. Across Ohio, that means investing in the network that families, individuals and businesses rely on to connect when it matters most, at home, at work and on the go.

Protecting that connectivity is just as important as building it. Copper theft is threatens communications infrastructure across Ohio, prompting AT&T to take additional measures to combat the issue. AT&T is offering a reward of up to **\$10,000** for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of copper theft suspects in Ohio.

This reward sends a clear message: Copper theft is a serious crime, and stopping it requires continued coordination among communities, law enforcement, public officials, recyclers and communications providers.

To date this year, AT&T has recorded **124 copper-theft incidents in Ohio**. Summit County has experienced the highest number, with 30 reported incidents, followed by Cuyahoga and Montgomery counties with 17 each and Franklin County with 16. **In Ohio alone, copper theft has caused more than \$260,000 in repairs this year, diverting crews and resources from work that helps improve service for customers.**

Every damaged or stolen cable can have significant consequences for customers, businesses and the broader community. When thieves damage that infrastructure, the impact goes well beyond the cost of replacing cable. It can disrupt the connections people depend on every day.

One incident in Akron demonstrates the potentially widespread impact. On August 26, thieves cut cables beneath a bridge on Howard Street. Five separate fiber cables were severed, disrupting infrastructure supporting all three major wireless carriers. AT&T lost connectivity to 12 cell sites, affecting Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson and Stow, as well as locations in Portage County.

Four copper cables were also cut. **The incident left 156 confirmed business customers without service**, along with hundreds of residential customers in surrounding

communities. Among the affected businesses was Blossom Music Center, which had a concert scheduled. The area had no cellular service available from any major carrier during the disruption.

The theft also complicated restoration work. After crews repaired the damaged fiber cables and installed new copper cable, thieves entered an AT&T maintenance cover and stole the newly placed cable before restoration work could resume the following morning. Service was finally restored to all remaining customers on September 30.

Incidents like this underscore that copper theft is not a victimless crime. It can disrupt communications for residents and businesses, interfere with major community events and affect the wireless infrastructure people rely on to reach family members, first responders and essential services. It also demonstrates why network resilience matters. Customers count on their connection to be there when they need it most, and protecting our infrastructure is an essential part of delivering on that promise.

In some cases, thieves searching for copper mistakenly cut newer fiber lines. Fiber contains no copper and has no value to copper thieves but cutting it can still cause extensive outages. Damage to communications infrastructure may also create hazardous conditions for technicians, first responders and members of the public. Cut or abandoned cables can result in unsafe work sites, while the resulting outages may affect services communities depend on every day.

We commend Ohio law enforcement agencies and local partners for their sustained efforts to stop these crimes. Continued, coordinated action among law enforcement, public officials, recycler, communications providers and communities is essential to disrupt copper theft, hold offenders accountable and protect the critical communications infrastructure Ohioans depend on everyday.

Ohio also regulates scrap-metal transactions, establishing identification, recordkeeping and transaction requirements intended to help law enforcement trace suspicious sales and reduce the market for stolen materials. Owners and operators of recycling businesses play an important role and should remain alert for materials that may have been stolen from communications networks or other critical infrastructure.

Community awareness is equally important. Residents and business owners can help by reporting suspicious activity near utility lines, network equipment, maintenance covers,

poles, bridges and other communications facilities. People should not approach suspected thieves or attempt to intervene. Prompt reporting to law enforcement can help prevent additional damage and broader service disruptions. At AT&T, building a stronger, more resilient network means more than investing in fiber and wireless infrastructure. It means caring for that infrastructure and showing up when customers and communities need us. For generations, customers have trusted AT&T to keep them connected, and we honor that trust by working to strengthen the network they depend on.

At AT&T, we remain committed to protecting our network and the Ohioans who rely on it. By working together, we can deter copper theft, safeguard critical infrastructure and keep Ohio connected. By working together, we can deter copper theft, safeguard critical infrastructure and keep Ohio connected. **Because when the connection matters, protecting it matters, too.**

Anyone with information about copper theft should contact local law enforcement and the **AT&T Global Security hotline at 1-888-871-2622**. Information that leads to the arrest and conviction of copper theft suspects in Ohio may be eligible for a reward of up to **\$10,000**.

For more updates and stories, read additional information [here](#).