



Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters

8100 Wayzata Blvd, St Louis Park, MN 55426

March 26, 2025

Chair McEwen, Ranking Member Dornink, and Members of the Senate Labor Committee,

On behalf of Minnesota's 2,000 professional firefighters, I am writing to urge you to oppose weakening safety standards for broadband installation.

The Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters Association is proud to be the voice of Minnesota's 2,000 Professional Fire Fighters. We are committed to serving our members and making Minnesota safer to live, work, and raise a family. Every day, our members report for duty committed to providing excellence in public safety to the communities we serve.

The broadband worker and infrastructure safety provisions passed by the Legislature in 2024 support the development of a skilled local workforce and hold broadband providers accountable for unsafe construction practices that jeopardize existing utility infrastructure and public and firefighter safety. Broadband installation-related line strikes can have devastating consequences. In 1998, a crew installing broadband cable for high-speed internet in downtown Saint Cloud struck a gas line. The resulting explosion killed four people, destroyed six buildings, and caused \$400,000 in damage. In 2018, a broadband installation-related line strike in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, led to the death of a volunteer firefighter. In 2023, broadband installation contractors severed the main and backup lines supporting Nebraska's 911 call system, leading to the loss of 911 access for 60 percent of Nebraska's residents for 12 hours.

Telecommunications installation is a leading cause of damage to underground utilities in Minnesota. When telecommunications installation operations hit underground infrastructure, including natural gas and electric lines, they threaten public safety – especially when the damage is not immediately reported. For example, the City of Bloomington recently reported that a fiber installer hit a gas line, patched it with duct tape, and reburied it – putting residents at risk.

With investment in broadband expected to grow significantly over the next five years, the Legislature is responsible for ensuring the safety of workers, infrastructure and first responders. Requiring contractors working near existing utilities to employ appropriately trained workers will make workers and communities safer, including Minnesota's firefighters. Delaying standards and cutting back on training hours will not.

We urge you to vote No on Senate File 908.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Scott Vadnais

Captain Scott Vadnais

President