

When a backup fiber route isn't really a backup

What the September 21 FAA communications outage can teach fiber teams about physical route visibility.

Incident snapshot

Primary circuit	Failed
Backup fiber	Unavailable
Reported impact	~9,500 flights
Reuters reporting, Sept. 21-22, 2026	

Key takeaway

A backup connection has a physical route, too.

Redundant circuits can still share conduit, right-of-way, facilities or splice points.

What fiber teams should check

- ☐ Can we trace the physical route?
- ☐ Do primary and backup paths overlap?
- ☐ Where are the splice points?
- ☐ What depends on this fiber?
- ☐ Where is available capacity?

Actions to take now

1

Map it

Document routes, cables, strands and terminations.

2

Check diversity

Compare primary and backup paths for shared infrastructure.

3

Keep it current

Update the record as the physical network changes.

Separate BWI example - not part of the FAA outage

30 min → < 1 min

BWI Airport reported reducing the time required to document a circuit from about 30 minutes to less than one minute using netTerrain.

"I can pull up our documentation from wherever I am and give them an answer."

— Dwayne Abrams, BWI Airport

Next step

Know where your fiber goes.

[See netTerrain OSP](#)

IDC MarketScape / 2026 recognition

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