

Google Fiber outage leaves KC customers offline two weeks after storm

Enlarge / Google Fiber equipment boxes in a Kansas City home in 2012.

Google Fiber | Bloomberg

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More than two weeks after a snowstorm hit Kansas City, Google Fiber still hasn't restored Internet service to all customers. There were still dozens of Google Fiber customers without home Internet service, a KCUR article published yesterday said. The outage has continued since the storm on January 11 and 12.

Google told Ars on Friday afternoon that the storm affected "thousands" of its customers in the Kansas City area and that it hadn't yet finished restoring service to all of them. "While we can't share exact numbers, at its height, we had thousands of open tickets and are now down to double digits," a Google spokesperson said. "Getting our KC customers back online has been our top priority since the storm hit. We added both crews and equipment to help with this in the city."

Google said that the Kansas City storm was "one of the most significant weather events" to hit any Google Fiber city. "We have learned a lot from our response and will be incorporating those into every aspect of our planning for events like this

in the future,” the company said.

UPDATE: We asked Google for an update this morning. Shortly after this article published, Google told us that “service has been restored to all impacted neighborhoods” but that there are still a few customers who are offline. “We are still working to resolve a small handful of individual customer issues and get them back online as soon as possible,” a Google spokesperson said.

Customers frustrated by Google Fiber response

The storm on January 11 and 12 dropped five to eight inches of snow on most parts of Kansas City, with some areas getting more than 12 inches, according to the National Weather Service.

The KCUR article details the plight of Julie Gronquist-Blodgett, her husband, and four young children.

“Gronquist-Blodgett says she and her husband have called Google Fiber multiple times and not been able to get a clear answer for why their outage has persisted, even as neighbors have had their service restored,” KCUR wrote.

To get work done at home, Gronquist-Blodgett and her husband have been making heavy use of their smartphones. As a result, they “have racked up \$100 in overage charges, which is more than their monthly bill for Google Fiber,” the KCUR article said.

Although the storm reportedly caused outages for other providers, Google Fiber appears to have taken longer than other ISPs to restore service.

“Our network is entirely constructed of fiber cables made out of glass, which requires special training to handle and

repair. And splicing fiber wires in freezing temperatures takes longer than, say, fixing traditional copper cable lines,” a Google Fiber spokesperson told KCUR.

Google told Ars today that Gronquist-Blodgett’s service has been restored. “The team worked hard all weekend to continue to restore service to the remaining customers, including the one mentioned in the KCUR piece,” a Google spokesperson said.

“I was calling every day. What is going on?”

Google Fiber’s inability to quickly restore service suggests that the company hasn’t prepared for storms properly, telecom analyst Jeff Kagan told KCUR. “These kinds of things happen to utilities. This isn’t an earthquake, it’s just snow,” he said.

Kansas City was the first city to get Google Fiber service, in 2012.

Customer complaints were also detailed Friday in a *Kansas City Star* article. “I was calling every day. What is going on?” Kansas City resident Kim Riley told the newspaper after going 11 days without service. “You all are Google, the world tech leaders. This makes no sense.”

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