

## Backhoe accident cuts Boston Net service

By Hiawatha Bray, Globe Staff, 5/14/2003

**A**n errant backhoe blade wrought havoc on Internet service throughout Boston yesterday, and The Boston Globe's Internet site, Boston.com, was among the victims, as was the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.

Workers accidentally sliced through a fiber-optic data cable used by Dallas-based Allegiance Telecom Inc., a telecommunications company that hosts the server computers of Boston.com and other local businesses. The accident, which occurred at about 6:45 a.m., disrupted Internet services throughout the day.

"In the Boston area, all of our data customers are affected," said Allegiance spokesman Michael Caputo. "They have no service to the public Internet." Other customers who used Allegiance to carry their telephone traffic also lost voice communications, but Caputo wouldn't identify the customers.

Allegiance began to restore service by late afternoon, with the help of **Verosity Technology Partners Inc.**, a Boston-based Internet provider, which shared some of its Internet capacity with Allegiance.

"It was a unique situation where we could lend a hand," said Michael Papell, **Verosity's** director of business development.

Randy Brandenburg, Boston.com vice president of product and technology, said the website actually never lost contact with the Internet because it has a secondary data connection. Unfortunately, the domain name service (DNS) computer for the site was still operated by Allegiance, and was knocked offline. A DNS computer is part of a global network of machines that direct visitors to the correct Web servers. If DNS is down, it doesn't matter whether the Web server is working, because Internet users will have no way of reaching the server.

Brandenburg said that Boston.com was aware of the danger before the outage occurred. Next month the site was to adopt a new system that included its own DNS computer. But the cable cut "got in 16 or 17 days ahead of us," said Brandenburg. Boston.com moved quickly yesterday to set up a new DNS computer, but Brandenburg said that it wouldn't do any good until some time today. That's because the Internet's entire DNS network must be told how to contact the new DNS computer, and the worldwide directory is updated only once a day.

Fortunately, **Verosity** came to the rescue, lending 100 megabits of data-carrying capacity to Allegiance. This put the Allegiance DNS computer back on line and restored service to Boston.com at around 5:30 p.m. yesterday.

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