

Pacific islands cable breaks, cutting off phones, Internet

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Technicians are restoring telephone and Internet service in the U.S Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands after a break in undersea cable disconnected the islands from the rest of the world.

Phone and Internet was fully restored on Tinian and Rota islands Friday afternoon, but Saipan had limited phone service and no Internet connectivity, said Jim Oehlerking, CEO of Pacific Telecommunications Inc., the [parent company](#) of IT&E, which operates the undersea cable.

"We're working diligently on all the islands throughout the company...and pursuing all avenues to bring it to a swift closure," Oehlerking said.

The outage affected the commonwealth's population of more than 51,000 people. Some cell phone customers on Guam also couldn't make calls or use the Internet.

The outage cut phone, banking, Internet and other communications. It affected credit-card purchases, withdrawals from ATMs and all other communications using the islands' only fiber-optic cable connection to the outside world.

The Guam Pacific Daily News reported (bit.ly/1CZCFzE) that when the undersea cable snapped on Wednesday, no phone calls could be made into the Northern Mariana Islands unless people had access to one of the few satellite phones on the main island of Saipan.

The cause of the [undersea cable](#) break remains under investigation, but may have been the result of undersea activity caused by violent weather, Oehlerking said.

"We probably won't get a good feel for it until the repair boat comes in and brings the cable up," Oehlerking said.

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