



## Willmar Connect Construction Has Started

### Bringing fiber internet to your neighborhood!

Construction for the Willmar Connect network is now underway. As work begins throughout the community, residents may notice utility markings, construction crews, equipment, and activity within neighborhoods. This work is part of building a new fiber optic network designed to deliver reliable, high-speed internet service to homes and businesses throughout the city.

### What to expect during construction

Construction is temporary, but the benefits of fiber infrastructure are long-term. Residents may temporarily experience:

- Utility locate markings
- Construction vehicles and crews
- Short-term noise or access interruptions
- Minor yard disturbance

Crews will continue working throughout the construction season to complete the network as efficiently and safely as possible.

This guide explains what to expect during construction, why work may be taking place near your property, and how to prepare for future service installation.

### Why are there colored flags and paint in my yard?

Before any construction begins, underground utilities must be located and marked for safety. This process is required by law and helps protect existing infrastructure such as:

- Electric lines
- Gas lines
- Water services
- Sewer systems
- Telephone and cable lines
- Private irrigation systems (if identified)

You may see:

- Colored flags
- Spray paint markings
- Utility company markings along streets, sidewalks, and yards

These markings help construction crews safely place the new fiber infrastructure while avoiding damage to existing utilities.

### Common utility marking colors

- Red – Electric power lines
- Yellow – Gas
- Blue – Water
- Green – Sewer/drain lines
- Orange – Communication lines like phone, cable tv and fiber.
- White – Proposed construction route

These markings are temporary and will fade or be removed after construction is complete. After utilities are located and marked, construction crews begin preparing the underground pathway for the new fiber optic network.

### **Why are they digging in my yard?**

Fiber optic infrastructure must be installed underground to connect homes and businesses to the Willmar Connect network. In many areas, this work takes place within utility easements or public right-of-way areas near roads, sidewalks, or property lines.

### **What is an easement?**

Utility easements are designated areas that allow utilities and infrastructure providers access for construction, maintenance, and repairs. These easements are commonly located:

- Along roads
- Near sidewalks
- Between properties
- Along lot lines

Even though the area may appear to be part of your yard, utilities often have legal access rights within these designated corridors.

### **Construction activities may include:**

- Directional drilling beneath yards and driveways
- Installing conduit and fiber lines
- Accessing utility easements
- Placing handholes or small utility boxes
- Preparing service connection points

### **Locating existing utilities by hand**

Even after utility locates are completed, crews may still dig small holes, often called “potholes,” to visually verify the exact location and depth of existing underground utilities before installing conduit or boring underground.

These small holes help crews:

- Safely cross existing utilities
- Avoid damaging underground infrastructure
- Confirm proper installation depth
- Plan the safest route for fiber conduit

You may notice multiple small holes throughout the neighborhood as part of this process.

### **Why are large holes being dug?**

In some locations, larger access holes may be required where underground conduits intersect or where network connection points are installed.

These areas are used to:

- Connect underground ducts
- Change fiber directions
- Access future maintenance points
- Install underground handholes

Construction crews work to keep these areas as small and temporary as possible.

## Why are orange pipes sticking out of the ground?

Residents may temporarily see orange conduit pipes protruding from the ground during construction. These are part of the underground duct system that will carry the fiber optic cable throughout the community.

These temporary pipe sections indicate locations where:

- Underground handholes will be installed
- Fiber pathways are being connected
- Future service access points are located

Once construction is complete:

- The conduit will be buried
- Handholes will be installed flush with the ground
- Restoration will be completed

There will not be large unsightly utility boxes or above-ground cabinets left in residential yards as part of the finished installation.

## Installing the fiber optic cable

After the underground duct system is completed, specialized crews will install the fiber optic cable through the newly placed conduit system.

This phase may include:

- Pulling or blowing fiber through underground ducts
- Connecting sections of the network
- Testing fiber connections
- Preparing neighborhoods for service activation

Most of this work occurs underground with minimal additional disturbance.

## What happens if I order service?

If you order Willmar Connect service, crews will install a dedicated connection from the neighborhood fiber network directly to your home or business.

This installation may include:

- Installing a small duct or conduit to your property
- Installing a fiber optic cable from the street to your building
- Placement of a Network Interface Device (NID) on the exterior of the structure
- Preparing the connection for future internet activation

By having this work completed during active construction, installation is generally faster, easier, and may be available at no upfront cost for a limited time.

## What is a fiber drop installation?

A fiber drop is the dedicated fiber line that connects your home to the neighborhood fiber network.

During a drop installation:

- A fiber line is routed from the street or easement to your home
- Crews may use directional boring or other methods
- Technicians install the line into the NID
- Minimal digging is typically required

Construction crews work carefully to minimize lawn disturbance during this process.

## **What about private utilities like sprinklers or pet fences?**

While public utilities are professionally located and marked before construction begins, private utilities are typically not included in standard utility locating services.

Examples of private utilities may include:

- Underground sprinkler or irrigation systems
- Invisible pet fences
- Private electrical lines
- Landscape lighting wiring

Residents are encouraged to clearly mark any known private underground systems before construction crews arrive. This helps reduce the risk of accidental damage during boring, trenching, or fiber installation activities.

## **How to mark private utilities**

Homeowners may use:

- Small flags
- Stakes
- Spray paint
- Temporary markers

If you are unsure where private utilities are located, consider contacting the installer or service provider who originally installed the system.

## **If damage occurs**

Construction crews work carefully to avoid underground obstacles whenever possible. However, because private utilities are often unmarked, accidental damage can occasionally happen.

If crews identify damage to a private utility during construction, they will coordinate repairs or restoration as appropriate.

## **When will my yard be restored?**

After construction is complete, restoration crews will return to repair disturbed areas.

Restoration may include:

- Replacing dirt and grading
- Grass seed or sod installation
- Repairing damaged boulevard areas
- Restoring landscaping impacted by construction

## **Restoration timing**

Restoration may not happen immediately after fiber installation. Factors that affect timing include:

- Weather conditions
- Seasonal temperatures
- Completion of construction in the area
- Soil settling
- Contractor schedules

Temporary restoration may occur first, with final restoration completed during appropriate growing conditions. Crews work to minimize disruption and restore affected areas as quickly as possible

## **Installation to your home or business at no charge for a limited time**

As Willmar Connect construction moves through your neighborhood, residents have an opportunity to have fiber infrastructure installed to their home or business at no upfront installation cost for a limited time during the initial construction phase.

This includes:

- Installing conduit or fiber pathways to your property
- Fiber drop installation from the street to your home
- Placement of the Network Interface Device (NID)
- Preparing your home or business for future internet service activation

## **Why you should order early**

Installing service during active neighborhood construction is the most efficient and cost-effective time to complete the work. Once construction crews leave the area, returning later for individual installations may require:

- Additional labor and equipment
- New boring or trenching work
- Separate contractor scheduling

Because of this, future installations requested after construction is completed may involve additional installation charges.

## **Reserve your connection now**

Residents are strongly encouraged to pre-order service early to:

- Secure installation during the free construction phase
- Help crews plan neighborhood installations efficiently
- Ensure your property is included while crews are already working in the area
- Receive updates on service availability and activation timelines

## **The future of connectivity in Willmar**

Willmar Connect is being built to provide you:

- Reliable high-speed internet
- Improved connectivity for homes and businesses
- Support for remote work and education
- Long-term infrastructure investment for the community

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as construction continues throughout the area.