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## **Virgin Media Fined £385,000 for Street Works Safety Law Offences in Carlisle:**

### **To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

A judge has imposed a £385,000 fine on Virgin Media after its street works contractors left streets across Carlisle in chaos.

The fine is one of the biggest ever handed down by a Cumbrian magistrates' court and was imposed after the firm pleaded guilty to seven breaches of street-works safety rules.

The city's Rickergate court heard how contractors working for Virgin Media repeatedly flouted rules which are designed to ensure that such street works are carried out without putting pedestrians and other road users at unnecessary risk.

Workmen are legally obliged to provide proper signage and pedestrian protection.

However, when Virgin Media's contractors carried out a huge broadband cable-laying operation across the city in July last year, this did not happen, District Judge Gerald Chalk heard.

The court heard a snapshot of the problems as prosecutor Jonathan Farnsworth described seven locations in Carlisle affected by shoddy workmanship.

Among the problem areas identified by Cumbria County Council highways officials was Upperby Road. Residents living in 15 properties on the street were unable to get into or out of their homes because of the cable-laying excavations.

On the same street, after closing a pedestrian crossing, workmen erected a sign telling pedestrians to use a non-existent alternative crossing.

Elsewhere in the city, pedestrians were forced to step off dug-up pavements and risk walking amid moving traffic on busy roads because no alternative route was provided.

On the day when all seven offences were committed – July 31 last year – Virgin Media's contractor had eight work gangs who were attempting to work at 22 separate sites across Carlisle.

A council highways inspector said the situation got out of control.

They were not providing suitable and safe alternative walkways for pedestrians and people had to walk along the road. The contractors should have made sure that all the sites they were working on had been made safe before they left them but they just kept digging more holes.

Virgin Media admitted offences relating to poorly guarded or signposted works in the following streets: Scalegate Road, Beaconsfield Street, Thirlmere Street, Uldale Road, Kirklands Road, and two sites in Upperby Road.

Virgin Media was prosecuted under the 1991 New Road and Street Works Act, which aims to ensure that all such work is carried out safely and with consideration for the needs of disabled pedestrians.

As well as being fined, the firm was told to pay prosecution costs of £3,500, and a £170 victim surcharge.

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**