

Welcome to Fiber Connect!

It's a great time for the fiber industry. Deployment is proceeding at an unprecedented rate, and still more fiber will be needed in the near future.

By Lisa R. Youngers / *Fiber Broadband Association*

The fiber industry is on fire. Last year, fiber surpassed DSL to become the second most common type of connection for home internet in North America. Fiber now passes nearly 60 million homes and connects 23.8 million households in North America. Total fiber deployment is at record levels.

Now, people are reaping the benefits. Fiber broadband is faster and more reliable than other means of connectivity. It supports a host of connected applications and devices. In fact, it is fiber that is propping up 5G. It is fiber that is fueling the internet of things in our homes and workplaces. It is fiber that is supporting smart cities. At the end of the day, it is fiber that is making the difference.

1. Fiber: We Are the Difference. That's the theme of this year's conference. To me, this means a few things:

Fiber broadband is the superior way to connect – so let's show more people that fiber is different.

Fiber provides the highest quality connectivity; it is faster and more reliable than copper, cable, DSL or wireless. But today, close to 20 million Americans lack broadband access. Investing in fiber broadband in small communities is worth the cost because it is a superior technology and has a high ROI, as it enables high-speed internet and the burgeoning internet of things to take hold.

Policy sessions at the conference will address the current regulatory environment for the fiber broadband industry and explain what the Fiber Broadband Association is doing to bring more fiber to more people across North America. These will be can't-miss sessions.

2. Fiber broadband makes a huge difference in supporting new technology and innovation.

Voice assistants, 4K TVs, high-def video games and other exciting new technologies are changing the way people live, work and play. To take advantage of these innovations, modern homes and enterprises need access to the fastest, most reliable connectivity possible: fiber.

At Fiber Connect, you will hear keynotes from experts who are taking full advantage of fiber broadband's unparalleled speeds. Michael Hess, smart-city project director of Orlando, will show how our host city is preparing for the connected future; Matthew Gunnin, CEO and founder of Esports One, will share how esports

is changing the video game world; Memo Doring, a senior technical evangelist at Amazon Web Services, will discuss the importance of IoT applications such as machine learning and voice assistants; Adam Zuckerman, an expert in emerging technologies, will discuss artificial intelligence and other innovations; and Glen Wellbrock, director of optical transport network architecture at Verizon, will make the connection between 5G and fiber. Also joining us is Janet Schijns of JS Group, who will share innovative practices to empower women in fiber.

3. Fiber broadband will make the difference in launching 5G.

5G will place enormous demands on fixed-wireline networks. This next-generation mobile network will include use of much higher radio frequencies than today's cellular networks. These higher frequencies carry larger amounts of data, but they have very short ranges. For 5G to work well, many additional small cells must be installed close together – as close as 200 feet apart. To provide multigigabit service to many users and applications, these small cells will need to be connected to hundreds of thousands – perhaps millions – of miles of new fiber optic cable for fronthaul and backhaul.

Simply put, 5G cannot happen without fiber. That is why we are devoting an entire day of the conference – Wednesday, June 5 – to 5G.

At this year's Fiber Connect, industry experts and thought leaders are convening to share best practices and discuss what's next for fiber. Whether you're looking to deploy a new network, seeking strategies to build your customer base or tools to make deployment more affordable, or looking for the opportunity to learn from industry leaders as they explore the future of fiber, we've got you covered.

Thank you so much for joining us here in Orlando.

This is my first Fiber Connect as president and CEO of the Fiber Broadband Association, and I could not be more excited to bring you this show. From myself and from all of us at the Fiber Broadband Association – welcome to Fiber Connect 2019! ❖

Lisa Youngers is president and CEO of the Fiber Broadband Association.