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# Cheated Workers on Verizon Projects Demand Verizon Take Responsibility

## Ditch diggers dug trenches without pay

**WHAT:** 45 Unpaid Day Laborers Rally for Verizon to Take Responsibility for Labor Abuses by its Contractors and Subcontractors  
**WHERE:** Verizon DC Headquarters: 2055 L St., NW, Washington DC 20036  
**WHEN:** Tuesday, June 24, 2008 12:00 noon  
**WHO:** 45 unpaid day laborers, the Legal Aid Justice Center's Immigrant Advocacy Program (Formerly Virginia Justice Center), the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, CASA de Maryland, the National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON), Jobs with Justice, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 32BJ, Communications Workers of America

Washington, DC – 45 workers from Maryland and Virginia who dug ditches to install the touted FiOS fiber optic service lines will rally Tuesday asking Verizon to take responsibility for serious labor abuses which implicate three Verizon general contractors and numerous subcontractors. The workers and advocates allege that Verizon's reliance on unscrupulous contractors and subcontractors to avoid employer responsibility is morally and professionally irresponsible. Workers from DC, Maryland, and Virginia will rally in front of Verizon's DC headquarters to deliver a public message to Verizon; that they must take responsibility for the abuse and exploitation of the trench diggers who are working to benefit Verizon.

“Verizon FiOS has arranged to have 457 million feet of fiber-optic cable installed throughout numerous states in order to provide high speed internet service to its paying customers. The problem is, the trench diggers who make FiOS a reality are not getting paid the wages they're entitled to under federal and state law,” said Laura E. Varela, an attorney with the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

One group of workers still has not been paid for work they did three years ago. In their case, Verizon contracted with S&N Communications Inc. to install fiber optic cable in Northern Virginia. S&N Communications hired KCS Communications Inc. of Fairfax

County, who hired Anthony Maxwell. Maxwell hired a group of workers to dig the ditches for Verizon's FiOS project, but did not pay them. With the assistance of the Legal Aid Justice Center, the workers obtained a judgment in federal court in March 2007 ordering Maxwell to pay eleven workers more than \$40,000.

"Verizon has known about this case for two years," said Tim Freilich, Legal Director of the Legal Aid Justice Center's Immigrant Advocacy Program. "Verizon needs to stop hiding behind layers of contractors and start taking responsibility for making sure these workers get paid."

On June 17, 2008, another group of workers on the Verizon FiOS project filed suit in federal court in Maryland against another set of Verizon contractors. Represented by lawyers from CASA de Maryland, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, and the law firm of Brown, Goldstein, and Levy, LLP, the seven workers allege that they too are owed significant unpaid wages for their work for Verizon contractors on Verizon's FiOS project.

"Workers on Verizon projects shouldn't have to go to court to get paid for their work," said Gustavo Torres, Executive Director of CASA of Maryland, Inc. "Verizon must take responsibility for the actions of Verizon's contractors."

At least six other crews of workers on Verizon projects throughout the Mid-Atlantic region have also reported being cheated out of their wages by Verizon contractors. In some cases, the workers have filed formal charges against the small fly-by-night contractors who hire them to dig ditches for Verizon's FiOS project. In other cases, the workers have moved on without ever recovering their lost wages.

"We are protesting on behalf of all of the workers on Verizon projects who have been cheated out of their pay like me," said Nerbin Rodriguez, who worked digging trenches in Northern Virginia in 2005 and still has not been paid. "Can you pay me now, Verizon?"

At Tuesday's picket and rally, workers cheated of wages and supporting organizations will march in front of the Verizon headquarters in downtown DC and the workers will demand that Verizon take responsibility for the actions of their subcontractors.