



**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

**Mission Statement**

*On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety and Government Operations Committee will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to; emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, and the executive, administrative, and operational functions of the city government and libraries.*

**The Honorable Mark Conway  
Chair**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 23, 2024**

**1:02 PM**

**CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**LO24-0070**

**Legislative Oversight -  
Underground Infrastructure Safety**

# CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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Odette Ramos  
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Robert Stokes  
Danielle McCray  
*Staff: Marguerite Currin (443-984-3485)*



## LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations

LO24-0070

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### Legislative Oversight – Underground Fire Safety

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**Purpose:**

For the purpose of inviting relevant city agencies & utility providers to discuss recent safety issues in Baltimore's underground electrical system

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#### **REPORTING AGENCIES**

Baltimore Gas & Electric Company  
Comcast  
Verizon  
Vicinity

Crown Castle

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Media reports indicate that there have been 10 underground fire incidents in Baltimore since 2014.<sup>1</sup> Since January of 2024, there have been 3 underground fires (January, June, & September of 2024) on North Charles Street. These fires have done property damage, cut utilities & telecommunications for thousands of Baltimore residents, and disrupted some City government operations such as the central library, sheriff's office, and courts being closed.<sup>2</sup>

According to one media report – members of the Baltimore City Fire Department have noted that these fires are especially difficult to address because of the difficulty in reaching the fire and the added challenge of the electricity running in the underground tunnel. The power must be turned off before the fire can be addressed.<sup>3</sup>

In the September fire one firefighter was taken to the hospital for minor injury.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WBAL report

<sup>2</sup> Banner report

<sup>3</sup> Banner report

<sup>4</sup> WBAL report

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Fiscal Note:** None

**Information Source(s):**

- ["Why does the ground beneath North Charles Street keep catching fire?" by Lillian Reed & Adam Willis – The Baltimore Banner 9/30/2024](#)
    - <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/local-news/underground-fire-outages-mount-vernon-7U5GGV7CSVAGPJZQLTBJ64MFAA/>
  - ["Power still out, streets still closed after underground fire over weekend in Baltimore" By Reporting from WBAL TV. 9/30/2024](#)
    - <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/underground-fire-cause-charles-street-closed-power-outage/62442472>
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