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New DIRT Report is Out: Failure to Notify Is Still the Biggest Culprit

Alexandria, VA – December 19, 2006 – A new statistical study has reaffirmed that damage prevention awareness programs are still an essential ingredient in the ongoing campaign to reduced damage to underground facilities.

The most frequently reported root cause of damage or near miss events was a failure to notify one-call centers, according to the Damage Information Report Tool (DIRT) report that was released today.

DIRT received reports from 51,600 events – more than double the number from the previous year – in arriving at its findings. Records were received from 45 U.S. states and one Canadian province. The natural gas stakeholder group submitted about 63 percent of the records and the telecommunications industry about 22 percent. Based upon the facility event data submitted for root cause, the option of “no notification made to the One-Call notification center,” was most frequently reported by stakeholders (16,098 events, or 31.2 per cent).

The study concluded that education and training programs about excavating best practices should be targeted at professional contractors as well as facility owners/operators and government organization personnel who excavate, along with their job site personnel.

The study found the root cause of events to be insufficient notification practices in 33.7 per cent of the cases. Locating and excavation practices were insufficient in 11.1 percent 22.2 percent of the cases, respectively.

Stakeholders reported the excavation equipment involved as backhoe or trackhoe, for 28.2 percent of the events. Hand tools were in second place with 7.4 percent, followed by trenchers with 3.6 percent and augers with 1.8 percent.

DIRT, a three-year-old program of the Common Ground Alliance, is geared to utilizing information to identify, initiate and participate in stakeholder efforts to improve stakeholder understanding, increase safety, minimize breakdowns in the damage prevention process and ultimately minimize the number of events.

“Much of this effort”, according to Steve Blaney of the New York State Public Service Commission and co-chair of CGA’s Data Reporting & Evaluation Committee, “will come through education, training, marketing and advertising programs.”

The report states that, “the ongoing analysis and assessment of the information from these tools and the growing participation in these programs will provide the means to monitor and evaluate damage prevention efforts.”

CGA has numerous programs aimed at improving damage prevention. In May, the CGA will formally launch a program to popularize 811 as the single number to activate the call-before-you-dig process. In coming years, DIRT statistics may be used to measure the effectiveness of 811.

The Common Ground Alliance is a non-profit organization leading the national effort to reduce damages to pipelines and other underground facilities through shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

For additional information about the CGA and its DIRT program, contact CGA at 703-836-1709 or visit www.commongroundalliance.com.

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