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Media Contact:

Khrysanne Kerr

330.283.3760

kerr@commongroundalliance.com

Common Ground Alliance's Most Comprehensive DIRT Report Finds Underground Utility Damages Declining

Most accurate data to date due to greater completion rate by stakeholders

Washington, D.C. (August 25, 2009) – The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the nation's leading organization focused on protecting underground utility lines and the safety of people who dig near them, today announced findings from its comprehensive Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report. The estimated total number of underground utility damages occurring in the U.S. in 2008 has decreased to 200,000 from the 2004 and 2007 estimates of 450,000 and 256,000 respectively.

The total number of events submitted for 2008 was 135,521, which represents facility damages, near misses and/or downtime incurred. The number of event submissions increased for the fifth consecutive year, which is indicative of broader support for voluntary data submission into DIRT. Several stakeholder groups currently submit data to DIRT as listed below.

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| – Natural Gas | 41 percent |
| – One Call Center | 27 percent |
| – Telecommunication | 23 percent |
| – Excavator | 3 percent |
| – Electric | 3 percent |
| – Other | 3 percent |

Part of the increase may be attributable to the number of Virtual Private Dirt (VPD) accounts being requested and developed. VPD is an efficient, secure and useful solution for managing damage and near miss data. VPD enables users to collect and report their data for DIRT, as well as collect data for unique "flex fields" which can be customized to fit the needs of the individual organization or company.

In addition to the larger number of records submitted; the quality of the records improved in 2008. The Data Quality Index (DQI), a measurement of each record's level of completeness, improved from 50 percent to 57 percent. The DQI was used to evaluate each record, based on a variety of criteria, providing insight on reporting trends and training needs, as well as providing valuable feedback to the submitter.

Of the total number of incidents reported in 2008, more than half (73,152) had a known root cause, and were identified as follows:

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| – Notification not made | 37 percent |
| – Excavation practices not sufficient | 37 percent |
| – Locating practices not sufficient | 22 percent |
| – Notification practices not sufficient | 3 percent |
| – Miscellaneous root cause | 1 percent |

Reported damages with “Notification Not Made” as the root cause are down to 37 percent from 48 percent in 2004, the year when DIRT submissions began. “Notification Not Made” was identified as the root cause in some 200,000 damages in 2004. That number was approximately 75,000 in 2008. More than ever, homeowners are calling their one call centers prior to beginning projects on their properties. The implementation of “811” in May 2007 has had a positive impact on the calling process.

“This year’s DIRT Report enables us to take a more comprehensive look at the progress being made in underground damage prevention efforts throughout North America,” said Bob Kipp, President of CGA. “With this data we are able to uncover important trends and also see the positive impact the implementation of 811, in May 2007, has had on reducing utility damages, specifically those caused by the failure to contact a one-call center before digging.”

The DIRT Report was created as part of CGA’s continuing mission to identify the contributing factors and root causes of underground utility damages and near misses, with the ultimate goal of reducing the occurrence of these incidents in the future.

The complete DIRT Annual Report for 2008 is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2009 report or establishing a Virtual Private Dirt account should visit the DIRT site at www.cga-dirt.com.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,400 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at www.commongroundalliance.com.

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