Common Ground Alliance Best Practices

The Common Ground Alliance promotes the use of Best Practices — procedures related to the safe and reliable maintenance, construction and protection of underground facilities.

CGA Best Practices are divided into the following categories:

- Planning and Design
- One-Call Center
- Locating and Marking
- Excavation
- Mapping
- Compliance
- Public Education
- Reporting and Evaluation

The CGA Best Practices Committee is responsible for the preliminary approval, maintenance and review of Best Practices. This committee is one of the largest CGA committees with approximately 35 members attending each meeting. After processing and reviewing a proposal, the Best Practices Committee must reach a consensus before forwarding the practice to the CGA Board of Directors for final approval. The complete process for Best Practices ratification is available on the CGA website.

Best Practices Approved in 2006

Policy for Unidentified Lines

Purpose: To help with identification of pipelines, wires, conduits, and other underground structures that have not been formally identified through normal locating procedures.

Practice Statement: The one call center has a defined and documented policy for handling calls from excavators regarding the discovery of an unidentified line.

Practice Description: To facilitate damage prevention, one call centers should have an established procedure which is implemented when an excavator calls and reports an unidentified facilitate. The action taken could be as simple as re-notifying all affected facility operators in the absence of any other specific requirement of state or local law.

Coordination of Emergency Response

Purpose: Identify how operators of underground facilities coordinate emergency response with adjacent facility operators.

Practice Statement: Emergency response planning includes coordination with emergency responders and other above and/or underground infrastructure facility owner/operators identified by the Incident Commander through the Incident Command System/Unified Command (ICS/UC) during an emergency.

Practice Description: During emergency situations there are many stakeholders involved: excavators; locators; owner/operators; first responders; one-call center; and the general public. Any actions taken by one stakeholder could adversely affect other stakeholders. Accordingly, emergency planning and response should be coordinated.

Web Services Solution

Purpose: To provide a secure web based excavation process notification.

Practice Statement: The one call center provides a method by which a member operator can receive their excavation notifications through a secure web service that utilizes an accepted standard for its ticket format, such as Extensible Markup Language (XML) 1.0.

Practice Description: In addition to all other methods and formats being used by one call centers to communicate excavation notifications to underground facility owner operators that do not have automated ticket management systems, they should also provide one that is consistently secure and reliable. Establishing this method within the call center along with an accepted standard format, such as Extensible Markup Language (XML) 1.0, will satisfy this practice. Providing e-mail and/or FTP communications methods alone will not satisfy this practice.

The complete listing of Best Practices is available for download on the CGA website.