



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Khrysanne Kerr

571-385-2606

kerr@commongroundalliance.com

New Common Ground Alliance DIRT Report Estimates that Damage to Buried Utilities Cost Society at Least \$1.5 Billion Last Year

Most comprehensive national report on damages to underground facilities to-date indicates that total U.S. damages increased 20 percent from the year prior amid a rise in construction spending and activity

WASHINGTON (Aug. 14, 2017) – Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the stakeholder-run organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, today announced findings from its comprehensive 2016 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report.

The report, which is the sum of all 2016 data submitted anonymously and voluntarily by facility operators, utility locating companies, one call centers, contractors, regulators, and others, **estimates that the total number of underground excavation damages in the U.S. last year rose 20 percent** from the year prior, to approximately 379,000, **and conservatively cost direct stakeholders at least \$1.5 billion**. The 2016 DIRT Report benefitted from a record-high number of event record submissions as well as a record-high Data Quality Index score (a measurement of the completeness of data submissions), yielding the most comprehensive analysis of damages to buried facilities ever compiled.

Data from 2016 informed CGA's first-ever estimate of the societal costs associated with underground facility damages in the U.S. As estimated by a very conservative model accounting only for stakeholders' direct costs related to a damage, 2016 damages alone cost approximately \$1.5 billion in the U.S. This estimate does not include property damage to excavating equipment or the surrounding area, evacuations of residences and businesses, road closures and/or traffic delays, environmental impacts, legal costs, injuries or deaths. Customers and users of underground facilities were most impacted, shouldering just over 30 percent of the total societal costs, and emergency responders absorbed more than 23 percent.

While the 2016 damage ratio, which measures damages per 1,000 one call transmissions, increased 14 percent from 2015, construction spending has risen such that the ratio of damages to construction spending has dramatically declined since 2004 (the first year the DIRT Report was issued), and estimated damages have stabilized into the 300,000-400,000 range since 2010 despite increased construction activity in the interim.

"The substantial estimated economic impacts of damages to underground facilities across the U.S. likely do not come as a big surprise to damage prevention advocates who are dedicated to reducing that figure – along with the very human impacts these damages can have – on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we hope that the 2016 DIRT Report's analysis of the \$1.5 billion in societal impact is eye-opening to both the industry and the public at large, and provides clear evidence that reducing

damages is solidly in the public interest,” said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president and CEO of CGA. “The latest DIRT Report also examines damage prevention paradigms in other countries for the first time, which is an opportunity to consider how this information can help us can work toward our goal of zero damages.”

Other significant findings from the 2016 DIRT Report include that damages caused by a failure to call 811 prior to digging have fallen to a record-low 16 percent, part of an encouraging long-term trend.

Once again, CGA has made an interactive DIRT Dashboard accessible to the public through its website, allowing users to view and manipulate the data through the lens of a specific element, e.g., damages by state, root cause analysis, etc. It contains a series of dashboard visualizations that allow users to sort information through additional filters, giving damage prevention stakeholders a powerful tool for drilling down into the areas where they feel they can have the biggest positive impact. Added this year are the capabilities to filter several dashboards by state or year (inclusive of 2015 and 2016 data), as well as a new dashboard that centers around the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s (PHMSA) determinations on the adequacy of state damage prevention programs.

“CGA’s Data Reporting and Evaluation Committee has worked tirelessly to recruit quality data submissions and explore new areas of analysis to inform the 2016 DIRT Report as part of its pursuit to provide damage prevention advocates and the public with comprehensive, relevant information,” said Bob Terjesen, Data Committee co-chair from National Grid. “DIRT data is more accessible than ever with the interactive DIRT Dashboard hosted on the CGA website, making it possible for any stakeholder to explore the unique ways each of us can have an impact on the staggering \$1.5 billion in societal costs caused by damages to buried utilities, and on protecting the people who work near them.”

The complete DIRT Annual Report for 2016 is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2017 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 1,700 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 <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

###