

Safety & Damage Prevention

...Putting it all together

CGA
Common Ground Alliance

Successful Advocacy Requires Good Data

Stakeholder Advocacy gathers and shares tools and guidance local stakeholders need to educate state and federal policymakers about how they can strengthen damage prevention legislation to improve public safety. By helping on-the-ground stakeholders communicate its consensus-based Best Practices, damage data analysis reports, and other valuable program information, CGA's Stakeholder Advocacy program can positively impact damage prevention legislation across North America.

Good quality data is an essential component of any type of advocacy, no matter what the topic, or whether in support of or against a particular point of view. Launched in 2003, CGA's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) database has received submissions of more than half a million incidents from damage prevention stakeholders nationwide.

At the conclusion of each year, with the support of statisticians, the CGA Data Reporting & Evaluation Committee (DR&EC) analyzes the submitted data and issues the DIRT Analysis and Recommendations Report. The DIRT annual report helps stakeholders identify the root causes of events, facilities affected, the type of excavator, equipment and work performed, along with other important data. The DR&EC and its consultants also look at other sources of information, such as one call notification ticket volume data, census, construction spending, and state regulations. By examining the DIRT data in conjunction with these other sources, the industry gains valuable insight into the factors surrounding underground facility damages and near-misses. For example, in recent years DIRT reports have:



Demonstrated that when an excavator notifies a one call center before digging, damage can be avoided more than 99% of the time.

- Highlighted the differences between occupant/farmers and professional excavators in the use of 811 services.
- Examined the effect of 811 notification exemptions on damage rates and found that states with five or more exemptions have significantly higher damage rates than states with less than five exemptions (2012 Report).
- Examined the effects of tolerance zone and life-of-ticket regulations (2013 Report).
- Examined the effect of enforcement and found that it does reduce damage rates (2014 Report).

Beyond contributing to the dataset at the North America level, DIRT data remains accessible for users to analyze at the local level. DIRT includes several tools that make this possible:

- The Query Wizard tool sorts data and generates tables and graphs.
- Data Sharing allows users to voluntarily allow other entities access to their data. For example, facility operators and excavators can share data with their one-call center, which can then use the Query Wizard to analyze the pooled data to identify marketing and education opportunities.
- Virtual Private DIRT (VPD) takes this a step further and enables the addition of fields beyond the basic DIRT form that are of interest to an organization. For example, a state regulatory agency can add fields relating to enforcement. Typically, an organization such as a One Call Center or State PSC/PUC will "host" a VPD and other companies then register as participants. The data from the VPD participants allowing analysis by the host organization.



Provided estimates of total damages in the U.S. and of damage rates (damages/1000 one call tickets).

DIRT is the essential source of data for advocacy by the damage prevention community. Stakeholders can benefit from DIRT in two key ways: reviewing the annual DIRT report to understand the national damage prevention landscape and/or using the DIRT features to analyze their own data on a more localized level. It is also a powerful tool that can be used to support proposed changes in state laws and regulations.

To learn more about the CGA DIRT program, visit www.cga-dirt.com.