

Nulca to Lead on Safety, Enhanced Communication as COVID-19 Restrictions Eased

Nulca, the nation's largest advocate for utility locating professionals, works closely with numerous industry associations and organizations to prevent utility damages, promote safety and enhance communication. The organization is comprised of contract locators, in-house locators, pipeline companies, private locators, SUE contractors, vacuum excavators, regulators, one call systems, manufacturers and industry suppliers.

Nulca is issuing an urgent call to all damage prevention stakeholder groups for an open discussion regarding the most beneficial course of action for economic recovery. Solidarity within the industry is paramount in navigating how to operate safely as our nation emerges out of the excavation restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. NULCA shares concern with many stakeholder groups that facility locators could be overwhelmed in the returning surge of projects after the lifting of the stop-work orders. There is also concern about state One Call centers becoming overwhelmed as excavators flood the system with postponed work orders. It is critical to recognize that all are working toward a common goal of safety and efficiency during this resurgence of business.

Nulca believes all stakeholder groups must collaborate in the event of a spike in excavation to establish optimum "best practices." For example, objective discussions on important topics such as:

- Identify actions to mitigate and manage any surge in tickets
- Proactively discourage unnecessarily large or duplicate locate requests
- Educate excavators and homeowners about white lining each jobsite and how this reduces the time to respond and mark underground lines
- Identify and foster more effective ways for the excavators, locators and utilities to openly communicate about potential issues or delays

Some states have already begun implementing strong plans, and new ideas are being communicated by various stakeholder groups to help alleviate potential issues and obstacles. Connecting all stakeholder groups to jointly discuss these "best practices" will positively impact the ability to proceed with underground excavation as life gets back to "normal".

Communication and collaboration, in times of crisis, as well as the best of times, will bring safe excavating and success to the entire industry. Now more than ever, it is important for stakeholder groups to work together as state One Call Centers, excavators, utilities, locators and regulatory teams develop a strategy. Nulca supports and welcomes discussion on a plan to safely navigate this post-pandemic period.

Please contact Ron Peterson, our Executive Director, by email at executivedirector@nulca.org to join the conversation.