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Common Ground Alliance's Latest DIRT Report Finds Underground Utility Damages Down 40 Percent Nationwide in 2007

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, announces findings from its fourth annual Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, which calculated approximately 256,000 underground utility damages for 2007, a figure significantly less than the original estimate provided in 2004.

Based on this new figure, there were roughly 700 incidents per day nationwide in 2007, compared to the more than 1,100 per day as estimated for 2004, representing a 40 percent decline in underground utility damages that have the potential to cause injury or loss of life.

Several factors that likely led to the 2007 reduction in damages include stakeholder support and promotion of 811, the national call-before-you-dig number that launched in May 2007, Regional CGA efforts, implementation of CGA Best Practices, and the use of new and proven technologies by excavators and locators.

The DIRT Report was created in 2004 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 DIRT Report is the best way for CGA to support stakeholders' efforts to understand the root cause of utility damages, and in the process, make excavation safer for everyone," said Bob Kipp, President of CGA. "The annual improvements we've made in the information we collect continues to help us uncover important trends, and it's particularly satisfying to see that our efforts paid off in 2007 with fewer estimated damages."

There were 121,334 actual reported damages in 2007, and the root cause for each of these was identified as follows:

- Notification NOT made 35%
- Excavation practices not sufficient 34%
- Location practices not sufficient 21%
- Notification practices not sufficient 9%
- Miscellaneous root cause 1%

This number of event submissions represents an increase for the fourth consecutive year, which is attributable in large part 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, which can be customized to fit the needs of the individual organization or company.

A full 2007 DIRT Report is available for download at www.commongroundalliance.com, and stakeholders interested in submitting data to the 2008 report or establishing a Virtual Private Dirt account should visit the DIRT site at www.damagereporting.org.

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 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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Date: August 19, 2008
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