



# DPAC

Distribution  
Public  
Awareness  
Council



## Excavator Focus Group Survey

# Background

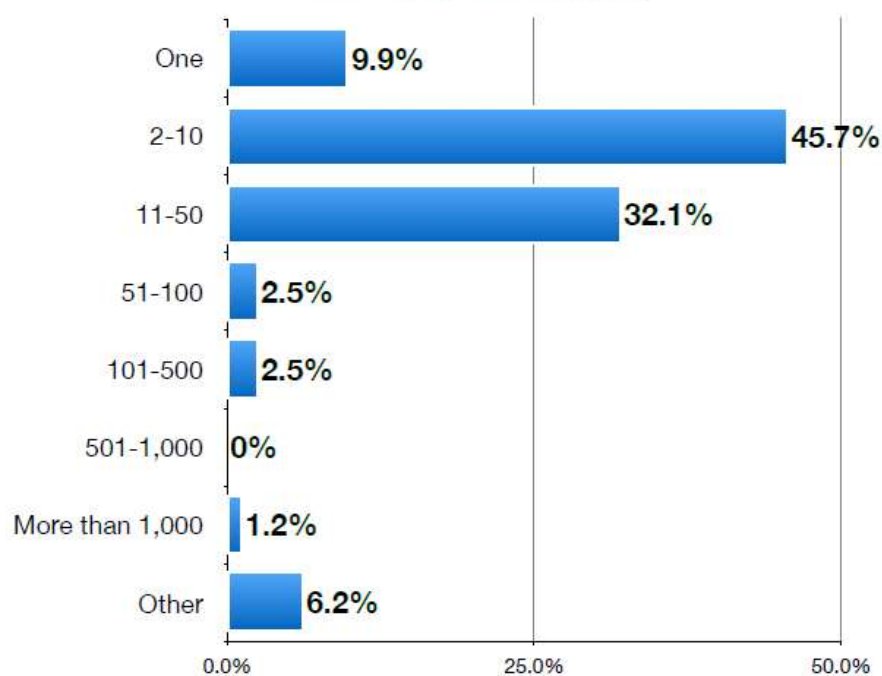
- In 2021, the Distribution Public Awareness Council (DPAC) membership commissioned in-depth interviews with excavators that did not call 811 before performing any digging and caused a damage.
- Purpose: to understand why they didn't call.
- Desired outcome:
  - Better understand reason for not calling 811
  - Determine possible enhancements to 811 process
  - Create strategy to increase use of 811 system



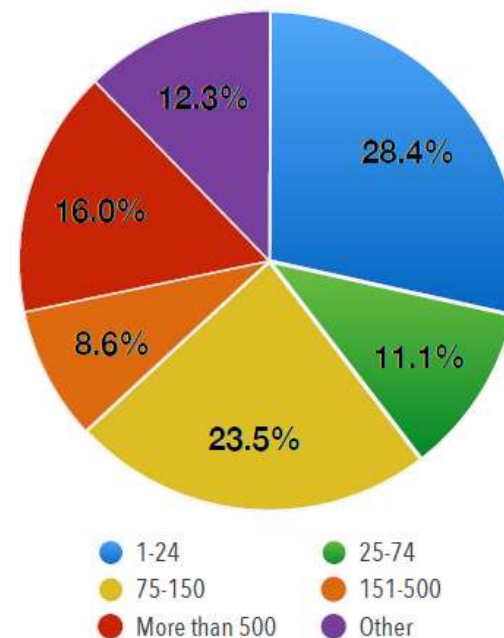
**Know what's below.  
Call 811 before you dig.**

# Interview Participant Profile

# of Employees At Company



# of Jobs that Require Digging



# What DPAC Learned

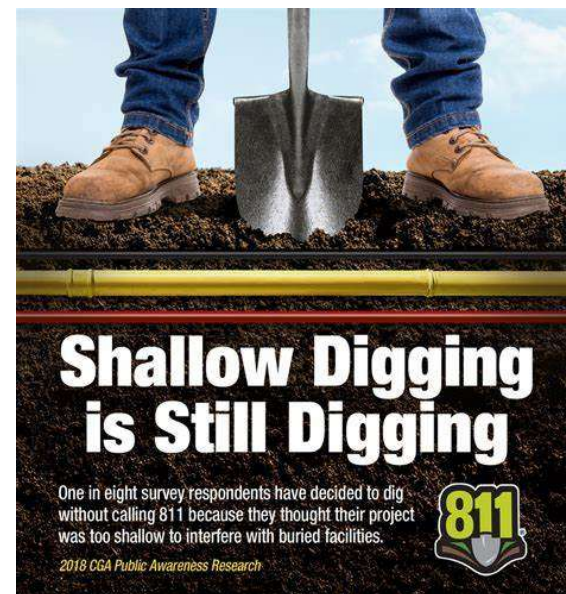
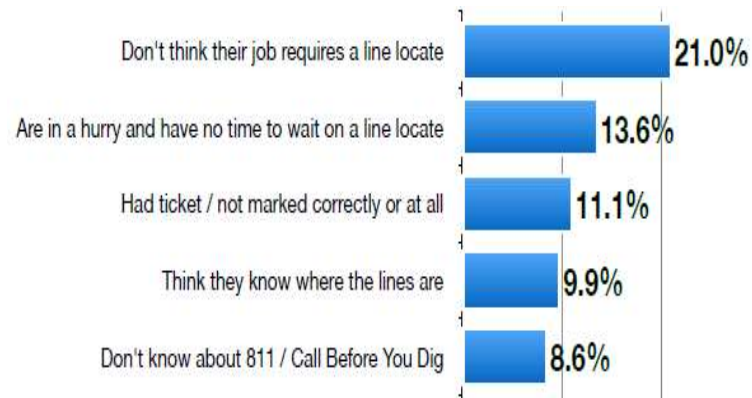
Excavators attempt to determine if job specs required an 811 ticket vs automatically calling 811

Examples:

- State regulatory bodies confuse messaging – laws differ from state to state
- Work doesn't warrant a locate
- Calling 811 only applies to major projects
- Unclear how to contact 811



# Reasons for Digging Without 811 Ticket



# What DPAC Learned

Wait time and Planning Ahead - we must work now

Examples:

- General contractors not giving enough time in project for sub-contractor/excavator to be compliant
- Municipality Sewer and Water damage/leaks – need to better manage emergency tickets
- Don't have time to wait on-line for 811 operator





# What DPAC Learned

Willing to take the gamble of not being compliant with possible fines

Examples:

- Acknowledge they are required to call for locates but rules are for other excavators
- Acknowledge that fines, penalties, and repairs can be costly but willing to take chance



# Consequences of Digging Without 811 Ticket

What were the consequences of digging without a line locate and hitting that gas line?  
What other consequences can you think of related to hitting a natural gas line?

Consequence	First Mention	Other Mentions
Cost of repair	42.0	14.8
Cost of fine	21.0	19.8
Delay the job	7.4	19.8
Fire / police coming to job site	6.2	4.9
No real consequences that mattered	6.2	1.2
Other	6.2	4.9
Don't know / unsure	6.2	8.6
Incorrect markings	2.5	2.5
Reputation of my business	1.2	3.7
Offered training after damage	1.2	—
Safety / injury / death	—	14.8
Destruction of work / loss of building	—	2.5
Explosions	—	2.5

 Opportunities



# How to address

Remove the fog from the messaging:

- Safety starts before the shovel or backhoe commences work
- Incorporate 811 safety values into the excavator's messaging
- Use the best method of contacting 811 for you and your company
- Advise on fines and penalties



# How to address

Address the term 'excavator' in the messages:

- Use of 'excavator' term for all types of digging work may be holding back the promotion of calling 811
- Is operator addressing different languages?


Quality of locates:

- Received complaints that locate marks are off



# SWOT Analysis

## STRENGTHS

- Universal 811 message
-  811 tickets
- Homeowners calling 811
- Request for locates adds safety value

## WEAKNESSES

- Estimate location – “we know where it is”
- Work doesn’t warrant need to call 811
- Mindset that 811 only applies to major work

# SWOT Analysis

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Operators to understand call center wait times
- Define 'digging'
- Incentive to avoid revenue loss
- Calling 811 should be a company effort
- Educate on requirements to call 811/which jobs qualify
- Identify worker language

## THREATS

- Wait time for locates
- GC to give subs time for locates
- Willing to take risk
- Hold times for 811
- Other excavation activity types (ie: landscaping)

# Changes or Improvement Suggestions

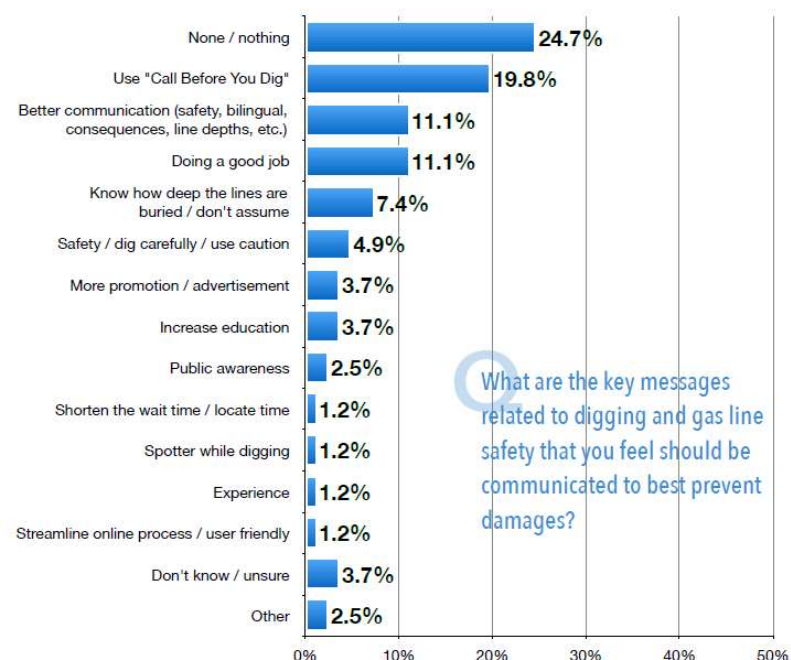
What changes or improvements would you suggest that could help in the process to request a line locate before digging? (Top 11 responses shown)

Changes or Improvements	%
None / nothing	43.2
Quick / easy process to get a line locate	8.6
Maps need updating (off roads, new developments, etc.)	6.2
Improve contact process (emergency #, etc.)	4.9
Update / streamline website	3.7
Shorten the wait time / locate time	3.7
Entering GPS coordinates / allow GPS	3.7
An app	2.5
Locaters doing a good job	2.5
Utility companies need to do a better job	2.5
Provide confirmation request received / completed (text, email, etc.)	2.5

*"It's one simple phrase, 'Call Before You Dig.' That phrase stimulates them to do it and it's such a great catch phrase - it's simple and gets to the point!"*

*"No matter how shallow or deep, you need to call 811."*

*"Call Before You Dig - no one knows the consequences so more education about the consequence and chances you are taking."*



What are the key messages related to digging and gas line safety that you feel should be communicated to best prevent damages?




# Next Steps/Suggestions

- Increase education on which jobs require 811 ticket
  - Movement of earth
- Define what it means to 'excavate' & 'dig'– type of work
- Prefer to receive 811 info via email
- Reiterate state laws
- Service is free & easy
- Operators can help 811 call centers with promotion of web-tickets and apps
- Promote Safety
- Collaborate with your Damage Prevention team
  - follow-up on mis-locates



# DPAC Activities



- Member Affected Public Survey benchmark report
- Collaborative natural gas message
- **Linked**  presence
- Update to DPAC website

# DPAC

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For more information visit:

[Distribution Pipeline Awareness Council \(dpacouncil.org\)](http://dpacouncil.org)



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