

PRESS RELEASE

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811 Emergency: \$61 Billion Lost in System to Protect Underground Utilities
Study Reveals States At Greatest Public Risk Due To Lax Policies, Enforcement

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - Failures in the nation's 811 system used to prevent damage to underground utility lines are costing \$61 billion a year in waste and excess costs and creating unnecessary hazards for public safety, particularly in states where the implementation and accountability are most lax, according to a comprehensive independent review released Wednesday.

The new study, "811 Emergency," includes an in-depth examination of 811 operations in every state and Washington D.C. and shows these costs and the increased risk to public safety could be substantially reduced if states with the worst records adopt more effective practices and procedures already in use in other parts of the country.

The review was commissioned by the Infrastructure Protection Coalition, a group of associations representing broadband, electric, natural gas, pipeline, transportation, sewer, and water industries who design, construct, maintain, or locate these underground systems with both union and non-union workforces. These are regular users and stakeholders of the 811 system who want to see it run safely and efficiently.

The study was conducted using a painstaking review of records, regulations, laws, and enforcement actions in every state.

"Ultimately, ratepayers are picking up the tab for this waste and bearing the public safety risk. Some states have figured out how to work this system safely and efficiently, and there's no reason others cannot do the same," said Tim Wagner, a coalition member and president and CEO of the Power & Communication Contractors Association.

A handful of states – Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia – account for more than 20 percent of the national waste, \$13 billion, because of 811 policies that lack teeth and, in some cases, do not require mandatory reporting of damage to utility lines, the study showed.

The review found waste and cost overruns largely were caused by: utilities and third-party locators needlessly sent out to locate lines for construction projects that then do not happen; poor instructions given to locators, causing wasted time or additional work; locate marks destroyed by construction and then needing to be reinstalled; and contractor wait time when location efforts exceed the legal notice period.

This study comes at a critical time for the nation's infrastructure, with the potential for trillions of dollars to be committed for new projects. The passage of a national infrastructure bill will result in tens of thousands of miles of highway, bridge, road, broadband, and water & sewer infrastructure construction, all of which will be near existing underground utilities.

"The important message here is that this is an imminently fixable situation. We can dramatically improve the system to improve public safety and cut waste with a combination of law, regulation, and process changes mirroring what the best performing states are already doing," Wagner said.

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About the Infrastructure Protection Coalition

The Infrastructure Protection Coalition is a coalition of industry groups who represent regular users and stakeholders in the 811 system and who want to see it run safely and efficiently. Members include: the American Pipeline Contractors Association (APCA); Distribution Contractors Association (DCA); National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA); Nulca – representing utility locating professionals; and Power & Communications Contractors Association (PCCA). The coalition and the "811 Emergency" study can be found at www.ipcweb.org.

About The National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA)

Founded in 1964, the National Utility Contractors Association represents nearly 1,700 U.S. utility and excavation contractors, manufacturers, and suppliers who provide the materials and workforce to build and maintain our nation's intricate network of water, sewer, gas, telecommunications, and electric infrastructure. NUCA is found online at www.nuca.com, and can be followed on Twitter at [@NUCA_National](https://twitter.com/NUCA_National). The association's Twitter hashtags are #WeDigAmerica and #NUCADigs.