

MEDIA RELEASE

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2023 Trench Safety Stand Down Season Concludes *Industry-Wide Event Reinforced Safety Training, Education*

(Fairfax, Virginia) – The National Utility Contractors Association’s (NUCA) Trench Safety Stand Down (TSSD) for 2023 officially ended on September 1. This year’s industry-wide event held in June reinforced a basic fact to all attendees: safety training is critical to a well-functioning utility construction jobsite and an employee’s daily activity.

“Time and time again, evidence shows that the key to significantly reducing the risks associated with our industry is employee training and reinforcement through events such as the Trench Safety Stand Down,” said Mike Flowers, NUCA’s director for safety, training, and education.

For the 2023 event, 25,812 employees participated in a stand down training event held by 455 companies on 2,487 jobsites across the week of June 19-23. These participation numbers were higher than 2022 as more companies realize TSSD enhances their existing safety programs. The event officially concludes at the end of the summer season, and after all attendee reports possible are collected by NUCA from company safety directors and participants.

The Trench Safety Stand Down (TSSD) was first held in 2016 by NUCA, with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) joining as a partner a year later. The goal of the event is to reach out to the many workers who work in and around trenches and excavations to provide them with information about current excavation requirements and safety procedures for working in trenches. This year’s event occurred at hundreds of jobsites across the nation, reaching tens of thousands of our member’s employees.

The TSSD week is a series of organized events held by NUCA and industry members to emphasize the message of safety around jobsite trenches and excavations. TSSD week is used by industry safety professionals to hold safety training, educational seminars, live demonstrations of trench rescues, and the other activities to reinforce the message of trench safety.

OSHA’s standard on trenching and excavation (1926.650, Subpart P) requires protective systems for trenches that are 5 feet or deeper, unless the excavation occurs in stable rock. The agency warns that trench collapses are “rarely survivable” because a cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as 3,000 pounds.

From 2011 to 2018, 166 workers—or about 21 workers every year—lost their lives from trench collapses, per OSHA, but 2022's 39 fatalities were almost double that average. That's unacceptable, and NUCA's numerous safety programs are designed to minimize hazards around excavations and on a jobsite. NUCA also supported OSHA's actions last year for increased safety regulation enforcement at excavation sites.

NUCA and the utility construction industry members seek out every measure possible to reduce risks on our jobsites, which we all know can be a dangerous place to work if someone is unaware of its hazards.

Companies conducted a Trench Safety Stand Down by taking a break during the Stand Down week to have a toolbox talk or another safety activity that draws attention to the specific hazards related to working in and around trenches and excavations.

Anyone who wanted to prevent trenching and excavation hazards in the workplace could participate in the Stand Down. NUCA encouraged anyone working in or around utility construction, residential construction, highway construction, plumbers, military bases, unions, associations, educational institutions, and safety equipment manufacturers to participate.

Across the year, NUCA's STAR (Safety, Training, Awareness and Recognition) Program also provides a venue for every company in the utility construction industry to measure the effectiveness of their safety programs and recognize how these important company programs can be improved.

By reaching as many workers as possible, the number of fatalities and serious injuries that occur each year in the industry can be reduced and make others, such as municipal and industry workers who are also exposed, aware of these serious hazards.

The 2024 TSSD will be held in mid-June. NUCA's webpage on the 2023 TSSD event can be found at nuca.com/tssd.

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About The National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA)

Founded in 1964, the National Utility Contractors Association represents more than 1,900 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 #NUCADigs and #WeDigAmerica.