

2010 State Damage Prevention Program Grants Progress Report
Funding Opportunity Number: DTPH56-10-SN-0001
CFDA Number: 20.720

Award Number: DTPH56-10-G-PHPS15

Project Title: Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Damage Prevention

Date Submitted: March 23, 2011

Submitted by: Ohio Utilities Protection Service & Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

Specific Objective(s) of the Agreement

Under this grant agreement, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio will establish a comprehensive stakeholder team to develop a cohesive underground damage prevention education program. Activities will include identifying target audiences, appropriate messaging, and marketing strategies and delivering the educational program to key damage prevention stakeholders.

Workscope

Under the terms of this grant agreement, the Grantee will address the following elements listed in 49 USC §60134 through the actions it has specified in its Application.

- *Element (1):* Participation by operators, excavators, and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of methods for establishing and maintaining effective communications between stakeholders from receipt of an excavation notification until successful completion of the excavation, as appropriate.
- *Element (5):* A process for fostering and ensuring active participation by all stakeholders in public education for damage prevention activities.

Vision 2020: Ohio State Damage Prevention Stakeholder Initiative

In 2010, a public safety grant was awarded to the State of Ohio and will be administered by the PUCO and O.U.P.S. The goal of this grant is to reduce damages to Ohio's underground infrastructure which, in turn, will reduce risk to Ohio workers, businesses and homeowners, and to our environment. To attain this goal, O.U.P.S. seeks to gather stakeholder insight and to use that insight to produce appropriate marketing tools to increase public safety awareness using a cohesive message – thereby effectively competing with the “noise” in the marketplace and increasing messaging efficiency amongst the varied stakeholder groups identified and their diverse audiences.

This comprehensive research agenda meets the following objectives:

- 1) Identify common key stakeholder messages related to public safety and utility protection
- 2) Identify and validate specific stakeholder constituent audiences.
- 3) Test key messaging concepts and inform strategic and tactical marketing approach to communicate to stakeholder audiences.
- 4) Provide baseline damage prevention perceptions statewide.
- 5) Allow key stakeholders to contribute to a common agenda to protect the underground infrastructure and promote public safety in the State of Ohio.

Research Methodology

Phase I – Qualitative Research: At least one in-depth interview and one dyad, triad, or small group discussion with members of each of the twelve stakeholder groups identified, yielding twenty-four interviews and/or group discussion for synthesis and analysis.

The qualitative research met the following objectives:

- a.) Gather stakeholder insights and perspectives regarding underground infrastructure and public safety.
- b.) Garner key messages, strategies, approaches, content, and preferences for the broader “excavator community” and discover specifically to whom (i.e. what key audiences) they communicate.
- c.) Learn how often these messages are being disseminated to their audiences, using what media/method and why.

Phase II – Quantitative Research: To reach statistical relevance, a total of 418 respondents representing the stakeholder constituent audiences were interviewed. We estimate our research universe to equal approximately 5 million homeowners and approximately 60,000 municipal representatives, locators, member facility owners, employees, excavators and O.U.P.S. members.

- Our sample of **269** homeowner respondents were surveyed (150 by telephone and 100 by web survey). *This sample will yield a confidence interval of 95 percent +/-6.2 percent.*
- Our sample of **149** respondents representing the excavator community -including the municipal representatives, locators, members, facility owners, employees, excavators and O.U.P.S. members -will be surveyed by telephone. *This sample will yield a confidence interval of 95 percent +/-7.9 percent.*

The goal was to measure the effectiveness of past communications and messaging strategies by surveying a statistically relevant sample of the audiences identified in Phase I. This information was used to identify common messages of importance in order to create engaging educational tools and to identify and use the most effective methods of message dissemination.

Phase II research yielded the following deliverables:

- a.) Validate/test messaging themes that emerged in Phase I.
- b.) Corroborate dissemination methodologies uncovered in Phase I.
- c.) Authenticate messaging efficacy via stakeholder constituent audiences (i.e. “what is the constituent’s level of awareness?”, “what are the key barriers to acceptance of existent messaging?”).
- d.) Uncover ineffective messaging techniques/styles.

Some of the key findings from Phase II (Quantitative) Research included:

Importance of Safety Topics

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>
Accurate location of lines	97.83	100	40	100	7.96
Calling Before One Digs	97.24	100	60	100	7.63
Timely Locators	96.05	100	25	100	9.99
Age/Integrity of the Underground Utilities	82.38	80	0	100	24.65
Training programs for those in the excavating community	76.69	80	10	100	23.13
Educating the public about underground utility safety issues	75.41	80	0	100	27.03
Underground safety legislation	74.61	80	0	100	23.42
Better communication/collaboration between those of you in excavating community	73.55	75	0	100	24.52

Potential Damage Reduction Solutions

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Std.Dev.</u>
Better record keeping of the location of underground utility lines	90.56	100	10	100	17.66
More thorough marking	85.03	95	0	100	21.49
Strict penalties for not accurately locating and marking underground utilities	81.43	95	0	100	25.29
Strict penalties for not locating underground utilities within the 48 hours allowed by the law	79.57	90	0	100	25.96
Strict penalties for not Calling Before You Dig	73.49	80	0	100	30.01
Participation in Damage Prevention Councils	62.97	70	0	100	28.59

What is the most effective message to reach a broad audience regarding underground safety?

<u>Top Effective Messages</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
“Call Before You Dig”	58
Threat of safety	34
Expensive/fines	5
You need professional assistance	5
Legislation – It’s the law	3

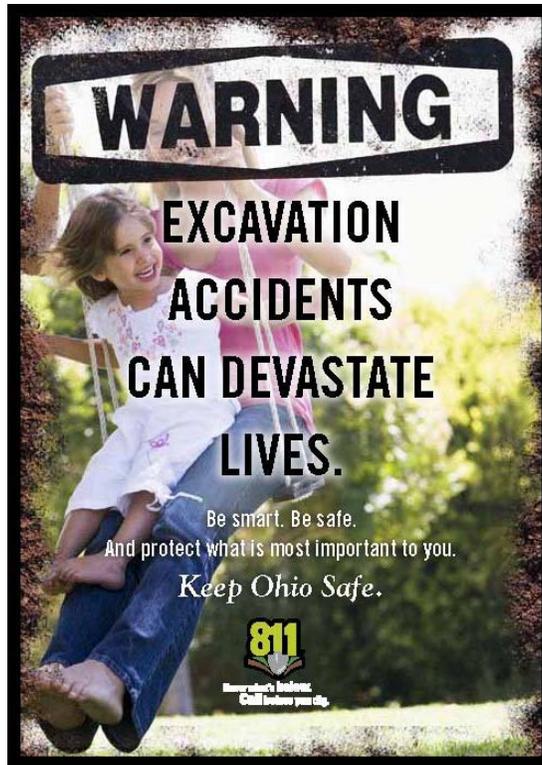
Tool Development

At the conclusion of the research phase of this project, the data collected was used to create an appropriate tool to increase public safety awareness using a cohesive message. The Project Coordinator collaborated with a professional marketing firm to develop an effective marketing strategy targeting facility owners/operators, locators, professional excavators and homeowners. The following educational materials have been created:

Educational Video The video was produced in English and included the messages of call before you dig, 811 and safe excavation practices. The video was created in QuickTime and Windows Media formats and is currently available for viewing at www.oups.org and is also available for other stakeholders to use.

Postcards Five hundred postcards with a pURL (personal URL address) were mailed to media outlets, legislators and professional excavators throughout Ohio directing them to view the educational video online. Because we chose to use a pURL, we are able to track the people who view the video online. Each of these viewers is also asked to answer a short survey. Tracking mechanisms will be continually reviewed.

Additionally, 15,000 postcards were mailed to homeowners, professional excavators and facility owners across the state directing them to www.oups.org to view the educational video.



Conclusion

Elements One and Five were clearly implemented in the research phase of this project, as all identified stakeholders involved in the damage prevention process discussed their implemented public safety activities and audience reactions to those activities. Both of these Elements also continued to be addressed during the tool creation phase of the project.

It is the intent of the Ohio stakeholders involved in this project to use both the tools created and the valuable data collected to pursue further collaborative underground damage prevention education initiatives in the future.

With support from PHMSA and a large cross-section of Ohio's stakeholders: facility owners/operators, facility locators, municipalities, professional excavators, State agencies such as the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, safety organizations like the Ohio Gas Association, and the Ohio Utilities Protection Service this important safety initiative was made possible.

Final Financial Status Report

All financial information accompanies this report as attachments, and includes Standard Form 425 and expenditures by each object class category as required. The awarded amount of \$100,000.00 was not spent in its entirety. The costs incurred by this project totaled \$83,724.15. Therefore, this project was completed under budget by \$16,275.85.