

2012 State Damage Prevention Program Grant Final Report
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Project Title: Ohio Utilities Protection Service State Damage Prevention Program

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This report will review the initial project outlined in the 2012 State Damage Prevention Program grant application, outline activities performed within the workscope of this project, and highlight its impact on the nine elements and its findings.

Project Review:

In 2010, with support from PHMSA, stakeholders within Ohio's excavation community were able to evaluate the public safety awareness campaigns related to damage prevention being used throughout the State. O.U.P.S. planned to strengthen the State's Damage Prevention Program by targeting deficiencies identified by that research. Specifically, we intend to:

Develop an educational television campaign targeting homeowners in order to increase their knowledge of Ohio's excavation laws and the need to "Call 811" before digging.

First, some information about the research project and its findings; Synergy Marketing Strategy & Research, Inc. was engaged in 2010 to meet 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.

Methodology: The QUANTITATIVE research effort included the following:

- To reach statistical relevance, Synergy interviewed a total of **418** qualified respondents representing the stakeholder constituent audiences. They estimated the 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 when projecting to the universe of potential respondents within the universe of Ohio homeowners identified by O.U.P.S.
- A sample of **269** homeowner respondents was surveyed (150 by telephone and 100 by web survey). *This sample yielded a confidence interval of 95 percent +/-6.2 percent.*

It is important to note that a representative from virtually all stakeholder groups within Ohio's excavation community were involved in the development of the survey (this was completed in phase one of the project), and that virtually all stakeholder groups were surveyed (during phase two of the project). This grant application is based on findings from that statewide initiative.

Although a great deal of information was captured during the research project, O.U.P.S. will focus on the area identified above – educating homeowners about the need to “Call 811 Before You Dig”. Survey results show:

Key Findings When Surveying Homeowners

Current knowledge and trends

1. “Is there currently a law regarding “call before you dig” in the State of Ohio?”
44% Yes **56% No**
2. “When planting a tree, installing a fence, or performing a function that requires digging, did you call the “Call Before You Dig” number in order to have underground utility lines marked?”
40% Yes **60% No**

What message and how to deliver it

1. “As a homeowner, I am more likely to be influenced by a message that...

Warns me of a threat to my safety	59%
Communicates the benefit of safe behavior	10%
A message of responsibility – to myself, my family, and my community	31%
2. “How can we help more people understand the dangers of damaging underground gas, electrical, cable, or water lines?”

More ads on television	48%
More ads on radio	7%
Better message	14%
Using social media	8%
Direct mail campaigns	10%
Electronic media	8%

Although O.U.P.S. has been aggressively educating homeowners for many years, research shows that most homeowners either believe there is no law pertaining to “Call Before You Dig”, or they believe that the law does not apply to them. Seventy percent of Ohio Homeowners believe there should be penalties for not complying with the “Call Before You Dig “ laws, even though 60% of them do not call when they are excavating. More work is needed.

Project Objectives / Accomplishments:

Based on results of the above referenced research an educational television campaign was developed that enabled us to deliver the “Call 811” message to Ohio homeowners. Specific activities included selecting a production company to create a fifteen second educational television spot, and establishing primetime slots on the three major television networks – in Ohio they are Channels 3, 5, and 10. The proposal from the production company (Slingshot Productions) and the three networks were submitted with the original application. Due to the amount of the grant awarded the number of airtime slots had to be reduced slightly in order to stay within budget. The educational spot aired during April - Safe Digging Month, May, and June of 2013.

Five hundred and ninety (590) 15-second spots aired during primetime hours, with a viewing public of 3,409,880 Ohioans.

The following Elements were addressed:

- Element (1): Participation by operators, 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 (2): A process for fostering and ensuring the support and partnership of stakeholders, including excavators, operators, locators, designers, and local government in all phases of the program.

Elements 1 and 2: The research referred to above was conducted two years ago. Phase one of that research involved interviewing a total of 418 stakeholder representatives about their public education programs. This stakeholder group included facility owners, municipal representatives, facility locators, the one-call center, and excavators.

Phase two of this research project measured the effectiveness of these programs by interviewing 269 homeowners. Homeowners were asked a series of questions, including what message would most likely change their behavior (and motivate them to call before digging) and what method of delivery is best. This project was based on that research.

Collaboration among Ohio’s stakeholders, and PHMSA’s support, enabled us to educate homeowners about Ohio’s excavation laws and the need to call 811. Which should ultimately reduce damages to Ohio’s underground infrastructure?

- Element (9): A process for review and analysis of the effectiveness of each program element, including a means for implementing improvements identified by such program review.

In order to gage the effectiveness of the television campaign O.U.P.S. invited Ohio homeowners to complete a short survey. The results follow:

Homeowner Survey Questions	YES	NO
Do you feel the message conveyed the idea that you can protect those you care about by calling 811 before digging?	73	7
Do you feel the message conveyed the idea that there are risks associated with digging without calling 811?	57	23
Do you know in Ohio homeowners are required by law to call Ohio Utilities Protection Service/811 prior to digging?	67	15
Has seeing this safety message changed your opinion of the importance of "Calling Before You Dig"?	38	45

Element 9: When the educational ads began airing O.U.P.S. posted a short survey for homeowners on our web site. We captured information about the effectiveness of the ad: specifically, homeowners said a message that “warns me about a threat to my safety” would be the most affective message, as opposed to a message that talks about personal responsibility or the benefits of safe behavior.

The ad tempered the “threat to my safety” idea while making it clear that the idea of calling before one digs needs to be taken seriously. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed felt that the message conveyed the idea that there are risks involved (threats to their safety) if they dig without calling 811. Although only forty-five percent of those surveyed said the ad changed their opinion as to the importance of “Calling Before You Dig”, we believe because those taking the survey were on our web site – they already understood the necessity to call.

This project was a relatively simple, straightforward undertaking based on in depth research involving multiple stakeholders and its findings. Ohio Utilities Protection Service’s goal was to educate Ohio homeowners about the need to call before digging, and ultimately protect Ohio’s and indeed the Nation’s, energy industry. We are grateful to the US DOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration for their support of this endeavor.