

## The Damage Prevention Partnering Process

BY WAYNE JENSEN, DAVID WIRTH AND HOYT LOWDER

The Tampa Bay Excavation Task Force (TBETF) is a utility damage prevention pilot project that was initiated by excavators to address the needs of excavators but designed to take input from all stakeholders, including utilities. In many ways, the efforts of the TBETF parallel work done by the Best Practices Committee of the CGA that is predominantly comprised of utility members but designed to take input from all stakeholders, including excavators.

The TBETF encourages experimentation with damage prevention ideas. During a recent TBETF meeting, David Wirth, a project manager for member contractor Dallas 1 Construction & Development, expressed his concern over utility strikes on an upcoming directional drill project in the City of New Port Richey. There were no contract requirements to provide Subsurface Utility Engineering work on the project and the cost to conduct a full SUE investigation was prohibitive for Dallas 1, the directional subcontractor, and the City of New Port Richey. However, due to a “no excuses for damage” approach championed by Wayne Jensen at the monthly TBETF meetings, all parties realized that this mindset would ultimately result in a project that began with a more complete design and ended in lower change orders and increased profits. The decision was then made to invest the upfront time to locate all existing facilities along the proposed pipe route.

Wirth met with Gary Peterson, the City of New Port Richey Public Works Construction Project manager, to discuss how to accomplish this task. Eager for improved data on their existing facilities and fully aware of the headaches caused by utility strikes, Mr. Peterson offered the services of his in-house locate team to assist in the location efforts. Realizing the value of such an effort, the directional subcontractor offered to employ a radar team led by Darlene Truluck of GeoMasters, Inc., with Dallas 1 personnel physically uncovering all facilities in the right-of-way using an air knife and air vacuum. Andrew Hartman, Owner of Supersonic Air Knife, Inc., provided the TBETF with these tools and allowed Dallas 1 a hands-on opportunity to showcase their inherent value.



Measuring the depth of a verified utility.

One of the steps in a “Damage Prevention Partnering Process” can be as simple as bringing together the stakeholders in a project to brainstorm what might be possible if everyone worked together to generate solutions, with all parties sharing in a pretty modest and insignificant cost compared to possible damage. It would have been easy for Gary Peterson to say “you bid it, you do it,” but he didn’t. It would have been easy for David Wirth to say “I’m not required to do it so why should I?” But he didn’t say that either. They didn’t say that because each took the “no excuses for damage” approach on this project. They simply began with each discussing “here’s what I can do” until they had a plan that would verify and document the location of every facility in the project construction area. Instead of saying what they can’t do, they discussed what they could do. Additionally, by investing the time and driving this “no excuses” attitude down to the crew level, Dallas 1 empowered their staff to take ownership of the project. Damage prevention was made the responsibility of everyone.

**The project was initiated through the use of the One Call system with a “request for locate” before this effort began:**

- Darlene Truluck first began sweeping the area with the ground pen-

“Instead of saying what they can’t do, they discussed what they could do.”

etrating radar to confirm the location of marked facilities. As was expected, the phone cable facilities were pretty close to where they were marked on the surface.

- Dallas 1 began physically exposing the phone cable facilities to confirm the accuracy of the marks. The phone cable facilities were very close to the One Call marking by GeoMasters.
- The location of water services marked in the One Call locate also were verified very close to where they were marked with a one foot or less in marking error.
- The wild card was the sewer laterals.
  - The City of New Port Richey knew with good accuracy where the lateral wyes’ were placed in the sewer main, but the routing of the laterals from the wyes’ to residences, especially those built 20 to 50 or more years ago, were not well documented. This is the case across the country.
  - Some laterals that were marked were found to be in excess of 20 feet away from locate marking when located by ground penetrating

radar and also by running wire down the lateral from a cleanout at the house to apply a locatable signal.

– Again, in each case, the Dallas 1 crew used the air knife and vacuum to physically uncover each facility.

In each case that a facility was exposed using the air knife and vacuum, all parties were able to document depth. On this project, cross-bores with all facilities will not be damaged because of the time spent in this effort.

**The value of this joint effort to the City of New Port Richey is:**

- They have now experienced the Damage Prevention Partnering Process even though that label was not used in this effort.
- The next time Gary Peterson has a similar project with Dallas 1 Construction, he will be completely comfortable with this concept of a public/private partnership that is an integral part of the Damage Prevention Partnering Process.



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# Partnering Process



A crew vacuuming a pothole to verify utility.

- Experiencing this kind of collaboration is the best way to understand the concept. This kind of collaboration was necessary on this project because there was no other contract mechanism that required the effort. There was no mechanism to pay for the effort. This example of partnering would not have happened without Gary Peterson and David Wirth taking a “no excuses for damage” approach to damage prevention and working together to get it done.

## The value to Dallas 1 Construction can be measured in many ways:

- Start with the intrinsic value of “success” in completing this project without damage.
- There were no production delays as a result of a work stoppage to repair damage. Additionally, Dallas 1 can close this project without the fear of unforeseen utility backcharges.
- There was no threat of injury to workers or the public that could result from a damage.
- Overall project cost is lower even though there were upfront expenditures to verify the location of facilities to avoid damage.
- The individuals on the ground were given an opportunity to drive the design of this project, ownership that leads to a higher level of both quality and employee satisfaction.

## If the project owner and the contractor did not take this partnering approach and damage were to occur on this project:

- The blame would likely fall to the locator who failed to mark within the regulatory tolerance zone. And, this is likely due to the lack of ac-

curate as-built drawings and difficult facilities to locate.

- There certainly could be other failures on the part of multiple stakeholders that could have resulted in damage.
- The damage would be reported to the national DIRT database.
- The CGA might actually have found themselves studying the root cause of the failure to avoid future damage.

Fortunately, we now have this example to discuss how a contractor/excavator partnered with a city project owner to avoid damage. From this point forward, informed stakeholders can

take steps to capture successes. We literally have many millions of successes each year by excavators and locators who find ways to avoid damage. This year’s DIRT Report shows a 99%+ success rate of excavations without damage when the One Call system has been notified to locate.

For each locate request or dig ticket, the One Call system captures a treasure trove of “success data” for excavations that are done without damage. The only piece of data typically not requested from the excavator at the conclusion of excavating activities is the answer to the question, “Was this excavation completed without damaging buried facilities?” This request wouldn’t necessarily uncover practices used to prevent damage, but it would provide a great insight into the kinds of excavations that are done without damage—and who avoided damage.

The Damage Prevention Partnering Process (D3P) is the key to capturing this information. This data could provide the foundation for future research into successes. **DP**

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