



## **Wisconsin Damage Prevention Council**

### **Minutes of the March 21, 2024 WI DPC Meeting**

Mike Meyer, from Diggers Hotline, began the meeting by welcoming new participants. Given many of the new people were not in attendance for the first meetings, Mr. Meyer informed them the DPC is solely focused on addressing the utility locating problem. Discussion should be focused on identifying causes and what can be done to solve the problems which contribute to the overall issue.

The subcommittee chairs then provided an update. Kevin Boyer, from EMCS and who is chairing the Data Sharing Subcommittee, stated his group will be meeting on April 2, 2024. Mr. Boyer said he has asked his subcommittee members to provide him any ideas for agenda items for the upcoming meeting. Mr. Boyer also said he has been researching what other states are doing regarding data sharing. Justin Larson, from Xcel Energy, said Minnesota has some initiatives they are currently testing or working towards implementing which pertain to data collection and sharing. Mr. Larson said he would get Mr. Boyer in contact with someone who can discuss the initiatives. John Hass, from Veit, provided some additional information about the initiatives in Minnesota. Mr. Hass said there is a proposed law which would require facility owners to GPS all new facility installs. There is also a pilot program which is working with locators to GPS currently installed facilities when they are being located.

Andrew LaTona, from We Energies, brought up concerns about the sharing of upcoming project data. Mr. LaTona asked if the group had any ideas what could be done to improve the sharing of future project data because forecasting staffing needs is extremely difficult without a clear picture of what work will be occurring. Mr. Meyer mentioned that he has heard from USIC that they encountered some pushback when they have been requesting communications fiber expansion plans. Mr. Meyer asked Bill Esbeck, from the WSTA, if he was aware of any of his members being hesitant to provide fiber build plans. Mr. Esbeck said his group has had discussions with USIC about sharing plans. The solution USIC proposes is for USIC to provide a spreadsheet for the various communications companies to fill out and return. Mr. Esbeck said his members do not consider this a user-friendly approach to providing this information and the WSTA would prefer an online option which would be easy for his members to access and provide the data. Mr. Meyer stated a site like that would take time to develop, and likely not be available to help for this year. Mr. Meyer asked if the companies would be willing to at least provide some basic information about upcoming projects. Mr. Meyer volunteered to collect the data and distribute it to the utilities and locators who request it. Mr. Esbeck said it can be discussed, but long term, an online solution would be best. Mr. Larson also stated that it is valuable for utilities and locators to share their information back to the excavators, specifically the current locator staffing plans in specific parts of the state. Mr. Larson said excavation companies would be able to see how many locators are in a particular area, compare that to their excavation plans, and identify potential problems with locator coverage. Mr. Boyer will add this item to the agenda for the Data Sharing Subcommittee.

Joshua Morby, from the Wisconsin Broadband Workforce Coalition, updated the group on the Training and Resources Subcommittee meeting, which was held on March 14, 2024. Mr. Morby said the group is focusing on identifying workforce challenges and needs. Mr. Morby said he asked the subcommittee to share any workforce concerns or needs they are encountering. Mr. Morby said there was not a lot of feedback from the people in attendance regarding specific needs. Much of the workforce discussion centered around concerns about whether locators will have the workforce necessary to meet the ticket volume. Mr. Morby also mentioned that Curt

Campagna, from the City of Milwaukee, stated the city locating is fully staffed for the first time in many years. DPC members, hearing Mr. Morby's summary, did state staffing and workforce is definitely an issue for their companies. Mr. Morby stressed the importance of identifying workforce needs, utilizing available resources to assist those needs, and being able to create thousands of new jobs.

Bob Welch, from The Welch Group and the WSLs, updated the group on the Legislative Subcommittee. The subcommittee is meeting on April 3, 2024. Mr. Welch said his agenda simply asks the participants to come with any and all recommended changes to the law, and to ask themselves if you could start over and build the statute from the ground up, what would you want to see implemented.

The meeting then opened up for other discussion. Mr. Welch recommended a speaker for a future WI DPC meeting. Mr. Welch recommended inviting Berntsen International. Berntsen manufactures a variety of products related to utility lines and marking. One product, in particular, can be buried with facilities to help tracking and mapping of those underground lines. Mr. Meyer said he would work with Mr. Welch to get contact information and invite them to attend a meeting.

Mr. LaTona raised concerns about tickets he is receiving from communications subcontractors. Mr. LaTona said he is already seeing examples of many tickets being filed, work not occurring, and then those tickets are being relocated. He said he has been trying to work with the subcontractors to get them to better plan and execute their ticket filing, but the subcontractors are pointing the finger back at the communications companies and blaming those companies for changing the plans.

This touched off a discussion of the various issues encountered with communications companies. One concern addressed whether law changes would actually impact communications or would the potential fines be dismissed as a cost of business, or passed on to the customers. Mr. Welch said fines may not impact the large communication companies, but if they are hiring bad actor subcontractors, fines could definitely impact those companies.

Mr. LaTona asked the group to think about if they had any recommendations or success stories regarding excavators better maintaining their markings at the worksite. Mr. LaTona said they receive many relocations which could be eliminated if excavators just maintained their markings better.

The next meeting will be in May as the group now moves to every other month meetings. Location, date and time will be sent out in the future.