



Wisconsin Damage Prevention Council

Minutes of the November 16, 2023 WI DPC Meeting

The meeting began with some opening remarks from Mike Meyer, who is from Diggers Hotline. Mr. Meyer briefly explained the goal of the WI DPC for those new guests in attendance. The meeting proceeded to introductions. Mr. Meyer asked the group to state who they were and who they worked for or represented. Mr. Meyer also asked, at the recommendation of Bob Welch, from The Welch Group and representing the Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors, that all participants offer some brief thoughts on the impact of the locating issues to their companies.

Many interesting and honest viewpoints were expressed. Richard Wanta, from WUCA, stressed the sharing of data being key, especially the need to make sure utility mapping is shared in a timely fashion so locators and the one call have the best data possible. Data sharing was also echoed by other participants, specifically the sharing of upcoming projects to assist with allocating locator resources. Barry Paye, from the Wisconsin DOT, emphasized the importance of planning tickets being responded to, stating, all projects start with a planning ticket. Mr. Wanta shared his concerns about the training locators are receiving. Mr. Welch, on a related note, said we may need to reevaluate the salary and training of locators to elevate the position. Bill Esbeck, from the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association, stated the current enforcement law lacks the proper teeth. Justin Larson, from Xcel Energy, added to Mr. Esbeck's point by saying, without enforcement we cannot achieve the ideal results. Mr. Welch added, accountability is key. Ralph Miller, from Michels, talked about the need to understand all the various perspectives. Matt Grove, from the WTBA, tied workforce concerns to the locating discussion stating, there needs to be a sense of urgency with locates because, when hiring the next generation of workers, we have to be able to assure them they can work safely. Kevin Boyer, from EMCS, discussed the idea of survey grade GPS or other survey grade action to document all planning ticket utility surveys to document legacy information on utilities and creating a statewide depository or an individual utility depository to store all survey grade utility locations. All new utilities installed will be required to survey the location and depth of each line at the time of install and file in the depository determined.

Mr. Wanta proposed the WI DPC form subcommittees to discuss various specific aspects of the locating problem. Brian Dreesen, from USIC, said it may be premature for subcommittees and thought one more meeting to bring the specific issues into focus might be beneficial. A recommendation was made that the WI DPC participants review the list provided by Mr. Meyer, which outlines some of the frequently discussed issues impacting locating. WI DPC members were asked to review that document and look for common ties between the items for grouping purposes, as well as prioritization of those issues. Mr. Meyer stated he thought the various specific issues, based on the discussions, revolve around: 1) Legislative Review, 2) Improving Ticket Filing Practices, and 3) Utility Locating Issues.

Joshua Morby, from the Wisconsin Broadband Workforce Coalition, stated that Workforce should be the 4th category. Mr. Morby stressed the excavator and locating workforce needs, if not addressed, will jeopardize the broadband installation success. Mr. Morby also explained there is a limited timeline to develop a plan to address the workforce impact before the PSC has to formally submit their proposal for receiving federal funds. Mr. Morby will provide Mr. Meyer an explanation of what the Workforce Coalition needs, how the WI DPC members can assist, and the timeline for response. Mr. Meyer will provide that information with the meeting minutes.

WI DPC members interested in working with Mr. Morby should review the attached document and reach out directly to Mr. Morby.

The next meeting will be January 18, 2024 at 1pm. The PSC has volunteered to host the meeting at an office in Madison. Specific location information and online option will be sent at another time.