



## **Wisconsin Damage Prevention Council**

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

The meeting began with introductions. Mike Meyer, from Diggers Hotline, informed the group that he had reached out to Brightspeed regarding the DPC recommendation that Brightspeed and StakeCenter be asked to participate on the DPC, as well as, talk to the group about what is being done in 2025 to alleviate the locating problems which occurred in 2024. Mr. Meyer said he emailed Brad Patrick, from Brightspeed and who also sits on the Diggers Hotline Board of Directors, but has not gotten final confirmation of either Brightspeed or StakeCenter attending future meetings.

Mr. Meyer also presented information about the DPC at the Wisconsin County Highway Association meeting on October 9.

Bob Welch, from The Welch Group, updated the group on the Legislative Subcommittee. The Subcommittee met in October and finalized the list of potential law changes. Mr. Welch had a preliminary meeting with his legislative contact to assist with drafting the potential law changes into language suitable for a bill. Mr. Welch said he hoped to get to his contact soon to get the drafts done, but that he may not have the drafts back until after the holidays.

Kevin Boyer, from EMCS, updated the group on the Data Sharing Subcommittee. The Subcommittee also met in October and discussed sharing of future project data and improving utility mapping for locating and planning purposes. Mr. Boyer said there are a couple additional action items to discuss, but this meeting focused on those 2 specific topics. Mr. Meyer stated that he volunteered to send a letter to Diggers Hotline members requesting they share future project data. Mr. Meyer said he would accumulate the data and provide it to locators and utilities. Mr. Meyer said over 100 emails were sent to Diggers Hotline members and an additional 100 letters will also be going out soon.

Bill Esbeck, from the WSTA, asked how the project information would be kept confidential. Mr. Meyer said the data being requested only includes basic information, such as estimated miles of work, when the work will start, when it would be concluded, and what county/municipality the work will take place. Mr. Meyer hoped only asking for that information would ease concerns about what data is being shared. Mr. Meyer also said he would only be sharing that data with locate companies or utilities who locate their own facilities. Mr. Welch said we could possibly ask for a confidentiality signature to receive the data. Mr. Meyer said he would look into some generic non-disclosure document.

Todd Roehm, from Lakeland Communications, said he has been providing future project data for years and has yet to see any improvement in getting his excavation tickets located.

Kevin Kolb, from Wisconsin Public Service, asked Mr. Esbeck if he had any insight into estimated fiber work in 2025 and if it will compare at all to the significant fiber expansion of 2023. Mr. Esbeck said he does not anticipate a significant increase in 2025 compared to the last few years, but federal funding for fiber work is expected to increase digging in 2026.

The group was asked if there was any information on the amount of damages occurring. Andrew LaTona, from We Energies, said damages were down slightly from last year. Justin Larson, from Xcel Energy, and Mr. Kolb,

from WPS, also echoed that damages were down slightly for each of their companies. They all said outreach and education efforts between their companies and excavators is key to the reduction in damages.

Mr. Larson asked Mr. Meyer to explain Diggers Hotline's stance on utilities who call in tickets for their subcontractors. Mr. Meyer said it is Diggers Hotline's opinion that the law states the person doing the work should be the one who contacts Diggers Hotline. It has not been unusual to have utilities file tickets for their subcontractors, but it is more common for excavators to have their customers (homeowners) contact Diggers Hotline for them. Diggers Hotline advises all excavators to file their own tickets, however, if a company chooses to file tickets on behalf of another company, there is nothing Diggers Hotline can do to prevent it. The viewpoint has been, that arrangement is between the excavator and the company filing the ticket for them and both parties are assuming the liability and risk.

The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, January 23 at 2pm. The meeting will be virtual only.