



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Utility Notification Center
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The Honorable Tina Kotek
Governor
254 State Capitol
Salem, OR, 97301

Senator Rob Wagner
Senate President
S-201 State Capitol
Salem, OR, 97301

Representative Dan Rayfield
Speaker of the House
H-271 State Capitol
Salem, OR, 97301

On behalf of the Oregon Utility Notification Center, I am submitting this report pursuant to ORS 757.562 (1). Oregon's underground utility damage prevention laws require that an update be presented to the Governor and Legislative Assembly annually.

ABOUT THE OREGON UTILITY NOTIFICATION CENTER

The Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC), commonly known as Oregon 811, administers Oregon's excavation laws and statewide locate requests. Created by the 1995 Oregon Legislature, its mission is to operate and maintain a state-of-the-art one-call system for the state to reduce damages to underground facilities and to promote public safety related to excavation issues. OUNC conducts training and outreach and adopts rules to regulate notification and locating of underground utilities.

Through its efforts, OUNC is committed to helping people avoid serious damage, injuries and expenses by preventing accidents before they happen. The service is available by calling 811 or going to Oregon811.com or www.digsafelyoregon.com. Homeowners and businesses can have their underground utilities marked before digging at no cost. The call center is located in Portland and is staffed by about 50 operators under contract with [One Call Concepts](#).

OUNC is a public benefit nonprofit corporation with the powers of an Oregon state agency, per [ORS 757.547](#). OUNC has a 21-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor, and a staff of two. Board members are unpaid volunteers, and no state funds are used to support the OUNC. The board approved a phased increase to the service tariff rate in 2022 to keep pace with increased costs and declining revenue. A third-party financial audit conducted in 2022 provided a clean bill of health.

SAFE DIGGING STARTS WITH NOTIFICATION

In 2022, Oregon's one-call center received 350,949 notifications from Oregonians who were planning to dig. This was a 1.15 percent decrease from 2021. These initial notifications are critical to protecting life and property when working and excavating around underground utilities. The call center is responsible for identifying the dig site and alerting the appropriate utility members to locate and mark their facilities. As a result, the call center sent out 1,934,676 excavation notices to underground utility members in 2022. This represented a 4.18 percent decrease from 2021 volumes.

The call center isn't just about calls though, as many submit their requests online. Oregon processes online locate requests through an internet ticketing application called ITICnxt. ITICnxt is an efficient and accurate way to request locates with enhanced mapping and marking. The system has achieved an adoption rate of more than 70%, and we are working to bring that number above 80% through education, training and informational resources.

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PROACTIVE OUTREACH AND TRAINING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

You have likely seen OUNC's public-facing messaging, such as "know what's below" and "call before you dig." The new unifying tagline introduced by Common Ground Alliance is "Safety is in your hands. Every dig. Every time." It reflects a shifting strategy from raising awareness to behavioral change.

Publicity efforts are aimed at raising awareness about the free 811 service and encouraging homeowners to call before they dig. Professional excavators and contractors are also targeted to encourage them to participate in our training programs, to utilize the enhanced features of the ITICnxt online ticketing system, and to follow industry best practices. In 2022, paid and earned media placements included print, television, radio, streaming platforms, social media and more.

Through sponsorships and partnerships with organizations like the National Excavator Initiative and the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), OUNC has extended reach and access to content. At public events including the St. Paul Rodeo, Hillsboro Hops baseball games, Dozer Days, and more, OUNC continues to go where the people are to engage with DIYers and all those completing projects requiring excavation throughout the heart of dig season (May-October).

OUNC's training and education programs help sharpen skills and provide resources for Oregon's damage prevention community. The OUNC hosts in-person excavator and locator training classes as well as a popular online Excavation 101 course. A total of 916 people completed our classes in 2022.

SUSTAINED REDUCTIONS IN DAMAGES

During the past three years in Oregon, we have reduced statewide damages to underground utilities by 22% -- from nearly 1,200 reported incidents of damage annually down to almost 900. The "we" in that previous sentence includes contractors and professional excavators, locators, utilities, our call center contractor, local and state government, homeowners and more. All have a role and a vested interest in reducing damages to underground utilities – and it takes a team effort.

We continue to track damage data provided in the national Damage Information Reporting Tool, through Oregon Public Utility Commission's complaint investigation and enforcement efforts, and through our utilities and regional utility coordinating councils. Damage data helps us determine the parts of our state with a higher damage ratio than others, and can identify root causes so we can sharpen our focus and move the needle on damage prevention and public safety.

IN CONCLUSION

Nearly 2 in 5 U.S. homeowners will put themselves and their communities at risk this year by digging without contacting 811 beforehand. Our work remains vitally important to protect infrastructure from being damaged and keep Oregonians from getting hurt (or worse). Let me know if you have questions or need additional information about the Oregon Utility Notification Center. I am glad to meet with you or your staff via call, virtually or in person anytime.

Respectfully submitted,



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Oregon Utility Notification Center
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