

Strategic Relationships and Pre-construction Meetings Practice

1. Objective

The objective of this practice is to identify and recommend ways of developing strategic relationships between key stakeholders that will foster the exchange of useful information regarding facility location and protection.

2. Requirements

Historically, it is not uncommon for some stakeholders involved in excavation projects in public rights-of-way to classify relationships between each other as adversarial, rather than collaborative. A key element to fostering goodwill among stakeholders is for each party to share a common goal. The first step is for each stakeholder to understand, respect and embrace the common goal of facility and right-of-way damage prevention. The next step is collaboration between stakeholders to reach the common goal of damage prevention. Promoting goodwill between stakeholders and opening the lines of communication best achieve this step.

This practice applies to all stakeholders with an interest in protecting underground facilities. However, it relies solely on the voluntary participation and communication of stakeholders to make this practice a success.

3. Practice Statement

Developing goodwill and positive relationships between key stakeholders will result in the exchange of useful information regarding facility location and protection.

4. Practice Description

4.1. *Strategic Relationships*

The strategy is for an individual stakeholder to develop positive relationships with other individual stakeholders in order to gain mutual respect and a desire to work together in preventing facility damage. For example, if a facility owner's project manager and the city right-of-way manager have a positive rapport and a route conflict arises due to an existing buried facility, the two individuals will be more willing to work out a mutually acceptable solution.

In order for relationships to develop it is necessary that stakeholders have an opportunity to meet and interact as well as establish a means of making future contact for exchange of information.

4.1.1. Stakeholders. A stakeholder is any entity (company, organization, agency, government, facility owner, property owner, contractor, etc.) that has a vested interest in protecting and preserving the public right-of-way and/or the facilities within the right-of-way. Below is a list of key stakeholders and examples of key positions within the

stakeholders' organization that may be involved in developing and fostering positive relationships:

- City, County or other Right-of-way owner
 - Right-of-Way Manager
 - Records and Drawing Information Manager
 - Permitting Manager
 - Locators/Designators

- Existing Facility Owners/Operators
 - Records and Drawing Information Manager
 - Operations Manager
 - Damage Prevention Manager
 - Locators/Designators

- Project Owner (Owner of new facility)
 - Project Manager
 - Construction Manager
 - Engineer

- Contractors and Subcontractors
 - Construction Manager
 - Construction Superintendent
 - Crew Supervisors

- One Call Centers
 - Center Field Manager
 - Records Manager
 - Locators/Designators

4.2. Pre-construction Meetings

Pre-construction meetings are held to review the construction plans and activities prior to commencing work. Even with mandatory pre-construction meetings, the permitting agency only has direct influence over the permittee's attendance by requiring the meeting for permit approval. Other parties attend only on a volunteer basis. It is possible to encourage meeting attendance as discussed below in Section 5.2 Motivation.

The main objective of the pre-construction meeting from the standpoint of this practice is the exchange of information on the location of underground facilities. Therefore, it is suggested that a specific meeting time be set that is for the sole purpose of discussing underground utility protection. By setting a specific time, the existing adjacent facility owners do not have to attend portions of the pre-construction meeting that do not involve them. Consequently, respect is demonstrated for stakeholder's time and attendance is subsequently enhanced.

5. Practice Procedures

5.1. Identification

It is each stakeholder's responsibility to identify individuals within their organization that have the knowledge, expertise and desire to assist in this practice. Initial identification could be accomplished by the city hosting a Damage Prevention Roundtable meeting (or series of meetings) for stakeholders. The city can request each organization to invite key personnel to attend. The Roundtable meeting should allow attendees the opportunity to brainstorm and discuss damage prevention measures as well as offer initial identification and contact between key stakeholders.

Successful communication requires stakeholders have a way of contacting one another with which they feel comfortable. This means they need to know how and whom to contact for different issues. The simplest method is to provide stakeholders with a contact list that identifies individuals by responsibility and provides contact information. Contact information should include mailing and email addresses, phone and fax numbers, and the best or preferred method of contacting the individual. The list needs to be kept up to date with individuals appropriately introduced and welcomed as changes occur. However, good judgment should be exercised prior to distribution of individual contact information. Best practice is to get specific approval from individuals prior to distribution of their personal contact information.

5.2. Motivation

By definition, each stakeholder has an incentive or reason for wishing to prevent facility damage. Motivation for participating in meetings, such as the Roundtable meeting, should be the desire to have representation and a voice at an event that has the potential to impact local industry practices. Roundtable meetings allow stakeholders to develop damage prevention systems and methods amongst themselves, rather than one stakeholder dictating procedures and requirements.

However, additional motivation may be required for levels of participation. Incentives could include adjusted permit fees and/or faster permit approval. For example, the city or permitting agency could develop a schedule of permit fees for future work, based on attendance or non-attendance at pre-construction meetings. Similarly, permit approval could be expedited for those entities that demonstrate the highest degree of stakeholder responsibility and/or participation.

5.3. Meetings

Below is a list of potential meetings or events that will allow stakeholders to meet and interact while providing beneficial information, education, or camaraderie:

- Utility Location Coordinating Committee
 - Monthly, quarterly or other recurring set schedule
 - Discuss active projects in the jurisdiction
 - Give notice to owners of up-coming projects in the jurisdiction
 - Exchange information on facilities affected by projects

- Damage Prevention Roundtable
 - Discuss and Brainstorm on Damage Prevention Measures
 - Develop Contact Lists

- Educational Seminars
 - Subsurface Utility Engineering
 - Best Practices
 - Trenchless Technologies

- Industry Sponsored Conferences
 - Damage Prevention Conference
 - Trenchless Technology Conference

- Locator Rodeo
 - Locators Demonstrate Skills in a Facility Locate Competition

- Pre-construction meetings
 - Discuss Utility Interferences
 - Exchange Contact Information
 - Damage Prevention

- Meet and Greet Social
 - Could be in conjunction with another event.
 - Could be pure relationship building without any specific agenda.

6. Reference

- U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Special Programs Administration, Office of Pipeline Safety, Common Ground, Study of One-Call Systems and Damage Prevention Best Practices, August 1999.

7. Practice Outcomes

The benefits of this practice are not typically quantifiable but subjective in nature. The intangible value of developing positive relationships between stakeholders is that it creates an environment of mutual respect and open communication regarding the management of damage prevention issues.

An important outcome of this practice is the willingness and desire of stakeholders to attend pre-construction meetings to openly share information on project specific damage prevention practices and procedures.