

Damage Prevention in Your Community

By Doug Meeks, Texas811 Damage Prevention Manager

Unlike the rest of the country, there is still a lot of digging going on in Texas!

Accidents happen when risks aren't managed by all parties during the process of requesting utility locates prior to excavation and then safely working around underground facilities after locate markings are placed. Job safety, reduced efficiency, chronic delays and even temporary down time can significantly affect an Excavators' bottom line. Fortunately, there are opportunities for Excavators to improve job efficiency and significantly reduce risks associated with work involving excavation, simply by taking a seat at the table with other industry leaders.

Every month, or quarterly in some parts of Texas, regional Damage Prevention Council meetings take place where stakeholders discuss ways to improve the process associated with safe excavation and take on projects that help make that a reality. A Damage Prevention Council (DPC) is a stakeholder-driven association dedicated to the prevention of damage to underground utilities. Typically comprised of construction contractors, utility operators, Municipals, One Call, utility locators, insurance providers, engineering firms, TxDOT, and other associated industry stakeholders, a DPC meeting provides an optimal forum where stakeholders can share information and perspectives, and then work together on all aspects of damage prevention.

Texas811 established the [Damage Prevention Councils of Texas](#) in 2000 to facilitate communication among the regional DPCs as well as local Utility Coordination Council (UCC) and Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) sub-committees that shared common damage prevention goals. As a result of this organizational effort, the existing entities began to coordinate their respective damage prevention efforts while new DPCs were established in previously unrepresented areas of the State. This same year, the [Common Ground Alliance](#) (CGA) was established to continue the damage prevention efforts envisioned by the [Common Ground Study](#). Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation and completed in 1999, this Study represents the collaborative work of 160 industry professionals who identified best practices relating to damage prevention. The state level Damage Prevention Councils of Texas and national level CGA are consistently working with industry stakeholders and regulators to produce stronger, more effective results through partnership, collaboration, and the pursuit of common goals in damage prevention.

Registered 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations, there are currently 23 Damage Prevention Councils active across the State of Texas representing 100% of the population. In promoting a spirit of shared responsibility, regional DPCs welcome all stakeholders who would like to be a part of the damage prevention solution. As a contractor and professional excavator working in Texas, you are invited to participate in any of the stakeholder roundtables which meet on a regular basis all across Texas.

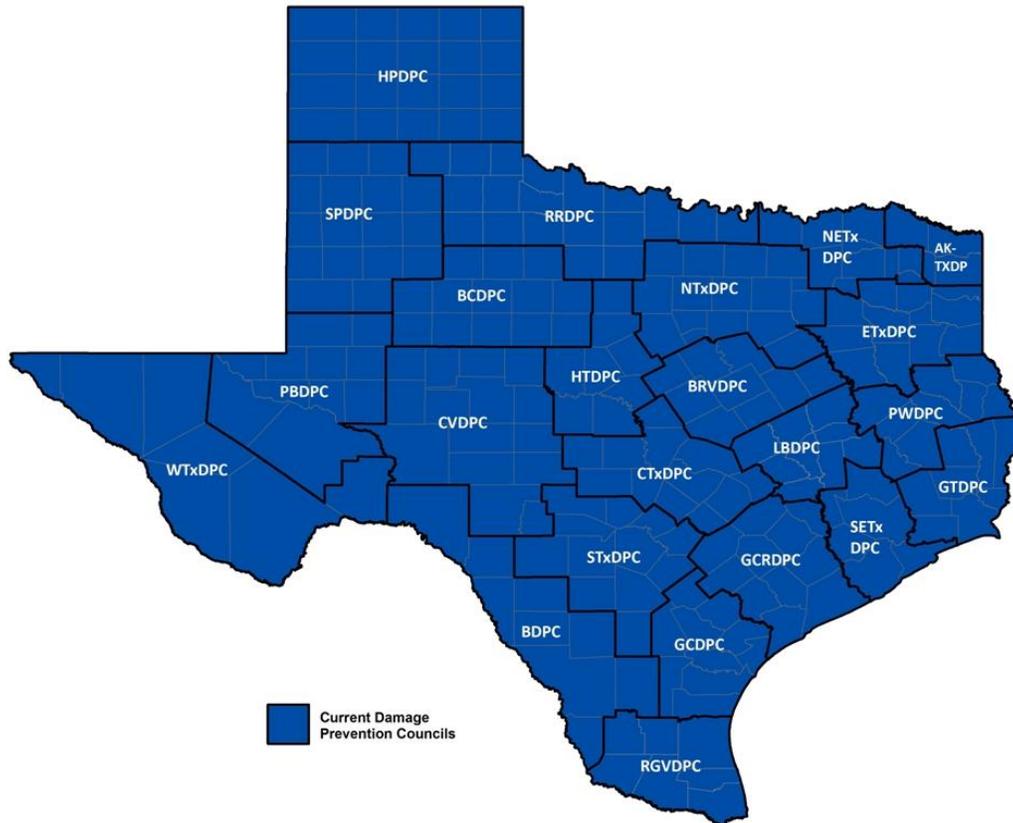
Don't be part of the problem when there's an easy way to be part of the solution.

For access to individual DPC websites and meeting schedules or to find information on establishing a DPC in your area, visit the [Texas811](#) website.



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Here are a few examples of what construction contractors get out of these regional meetings:

"There is no doubt that the Central Texas DPC is a very worthwhile organization and there is much to be gained by contractors being involved. Increased and regular involvement of the construction, design, and utility provider community will have a positive effect on utility hits, efficiency of design, and construction productivity. I strongly urge everyone to attend these meetings and get involved."

Michael J. Ehrhardt - J.C. Evans Construction Company, Past President of Austin Contractors & Engineers Association

"JD Abrams, LPs' involvement and participation with the West Texas DPC has increased our knowledge of the rules and regulations directly affecting the safety of our employees. Dissemination of the information to our employees on the importance of line locates prior to any excavation has prevented the loss of lives, property damage, and project delays. The prevention of loss does not end at the initial first call for line locates, but the continuance of keeping the ticket up to date throughout the life of the project."

Jerry Lopez - J.D. Abrams, L.P.

"As we all know, time is money. The current business environment has forced us to look for ways to be more efficient in our operation to remain competitive. Being involved with the South Texas DPC has given us a valuable tool to use to accomplish this thru networking, education and training. We have a better understanding of scheduling and location of existing utilities which helps to minimize construction delays and down time."

John Orsak - Southwest Backhoe & Utility Services, Inc.

"I have attended about 5 of the Houston area damage control meetings and one in the Port Arthur Area. It's a great idea. Just wish that there were more of us highway contractors showing up for them. I think if contractors were aware of the connections you can make, they would surely be attending. I was able to quickly resolve an issue with the telephone company here in Houston after meeting the reps at one of the meetings. I better understand the problems associated with these types of issues as a result of attending. It really is like pulling back the curtain. In my opinion, any highway contractor that digs should be showing up for the meetings. The "other side" needs to hear our issues."

Ken Burge - J.D. Abrams, L.P.

"I have been attending DPC meetings now for about 15 years. I have found answers to questions I had in these meetings as you can meet the owners, their reps and contractors who do the same thing we do. With each and every safety meeting held through our DPC meetings here in Houston I learn something new and meet newcomers to our groups. I have learned to listen and share valuable information concerning safety. I can vouch for all those that I know who want to see their employees work safely and go home to their families every night."

Gilbert Hill - Jimerson Underground, Inc.