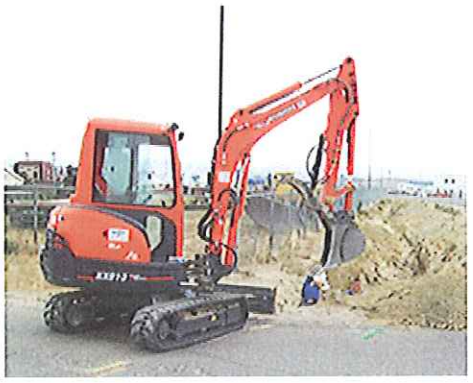
News

# Road-Mapping Project Will Help Prevent Damage from Digging



**A crew works to repair a damaged gas main in an industrial area. Wyoming's system for preventing damage to underground infrastructure due to excavation will be enhanced by a new road-mapping project that will establish a computer system for the automated collection, normalization and publication of Wyoming's geospatial roads data. (Questar Photo)**

February 3, 2015 — Wyoming contractors, utilities, governments and members of the public will have access to detailed, computerized information about the state's roads as a result of a grant awarded to One-Call of Wyoming (OCW) in conjunction with the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center (WyGISC) at the University of Wyoming.

Under the grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), OCW will coordinate a street-mapping project that will establish a computer system for the automated collection, normalization and publication of Wyoming's geospatial roads data.

"Our objective under this grant award is to provide a process for updating and maintaining an accurate road database, which will improve the damage prevention process by assuring accurate communication between excavators, notification center representatives and the owners of underground facilities," says Mark Ransdell, president of the OCW Board of Directors. "This is a great cooperative effort and will be a win-win proposition for everyone involved, including a step forward for public safety."

Whether you are adding a room to your house, building a road, digging a trench, planting a tree or doing anything else that requires digging, you run the risk of hitting and damaging electric, telephone and gas lines; water and sewer lines; TV or Internet cables; and pipelines carrying crude oil, petroleum products and natural gas. State law requires you to contact One-Call Wyoming by dialing 811 or 800-849-2476 to request underground facilities be located and marked before you dig.

The service is free to the caller but, if you don't call for a location and if your excavation damages an underground facility, under state law you could "be liable for all damages, including personal injury and property damages, caused by the excavation." You also could be fined up to $5,000. Wyoming law requires underground facility owners to respond to "811" ticket requests within two business days and to locate their facilities with marks on the surface.

To reduce the likelihood of such damage, the updated road database will be available to a variety of users in Wyoming, including OCW.

"Imagine an excavator or homeowner planning an excavation in a relatively new housing subdivision calls 811 to get the underground facilities located. Because updates to commercially available street maps may take several years to be published, the OCW call-center representative may be looking at a map where the street does not exist, yet the excavator knows the buried utilities, streets and homes have been there for years. Lack of current street mapping makes communication between the excavator and the OCW call-center very difficult or impossible," Ransdell says.

WyGISC will assist OCW with setting up the roads data collection system and coordinating with Wyoming's counties and other authoritative sources of roads data to gain access to more current and accurate geospatial data for Wyoming's roads.

The new Wyoming Geospatial Hub -- housed and maintained by WyGISC, the state's principal source for the discovery and delivery of publicly accessible statewide geospatial data -- will provide access to the collected local-level roads data.

"With roughly 30 authoritative sources involved in creating and maintaining some portion of the spatial delineation of Wyoming's roadways, this effort to establish a collection system should provide an efficient means of sharing the data back out through the Wyoming Geospatial Hub for use to the larger public user base while reducing some of the redundant maintenance and distribution costs for the roadway geodata authoritative sources," says Paul Caffrey, WyGISC research scientist and OCW project principal investigator.

OCW secured the $78,360 grant from PHMSA in a competitive process that included requests from dozens of states. Only a portion of the requests were successful.

Other grant award partners include Pass Word Inc., the One-Call of Wyoming communications service provider; the University of Idaho (UI); and the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT). Pass Word Inc. will provide oversight and guidance to achieve the objectives, and UI will provide the software and support for WyGISC to duplicate Idaho's roads data collection system here in Wyoming.

"The Wyoming Department of Transportation is excited about this project," says Martin Kidner, state planning engineer for WYDOT. "We are charged with tracking the safety on public roads and performing other studies needing the road inventory. Before, it was a manpower-intensive comparison of multiple maps and interviewing other sources, and this initiative will save a lot of time and frustration."

Other OCW supporters include the Wyoming Public Service Commission, Wyoming Pipeline Association, Wyoming Contractors Association and Call-In Dig-In Safety Council.

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