

# 2023 End of Year Analysis

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This report by the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) provides a summary and analysis of Washington's (more than 2,100) damage events occurring in 2023, and a brief description about dig law complaints and training. To generate the most accurate analysis of damage events, it is important that damages are reported to Washington's Damage Incident Reporting Tool (DIRT) within the 45-day timeframe set forth in the statute.

The UTC pulls DIRT damage reports once a month, after the 45-day submittal window, using a system to also capture late reports, which may have been excluded in the past.

The UTC also continues to use a flex field in the DIRT reports to provide a designated section for the submitter to give specific contact information about the excavator who caused damage. Prior to the addition of the flex field, contact information could only be placed in the comments section of the DIRT form. Due to this change, the UTC has seen improvements in reporting information, especially related to damage to natural gas without a locate. In addition, the detail in reporting has significantly helped the UTC in its ability to accurately analyze the DIRT data for enforcement, education, and training.



## DIRT Form

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The five root cause options on the DIRT form are:

1. Notification Issue
2. Locating Issue - Facility NOT marked
3. Locating Issue - Facility marked INACCURATELY
4. Excavation Issue
5. Miscellaneous

Two problematic issues with the root cause determinations are:

Under Excavation Issue, there is a selection choice of “Improper excavation practice not listed above”(meaning the submitter doesn’t believe the damage cause fits into any of the other categories). Unfortunately, there is no comment requirement to determine what caused the damage, and it is the most used selection in the category.

The Miscellaneous category has an option to choose “root cause not listed” with a requirement to leave a comment. When examining the comments, many times the correct root cause for the damage will correctly fit into another category.



## 2023 Damage Picture

### Damaged Facilities:

- Cable TV: 232
- Electric: 308
- Natural Gas: 1245
- Other: 62
- Telecommunications: 218
- Water: 64





# 2023 Reported Damage

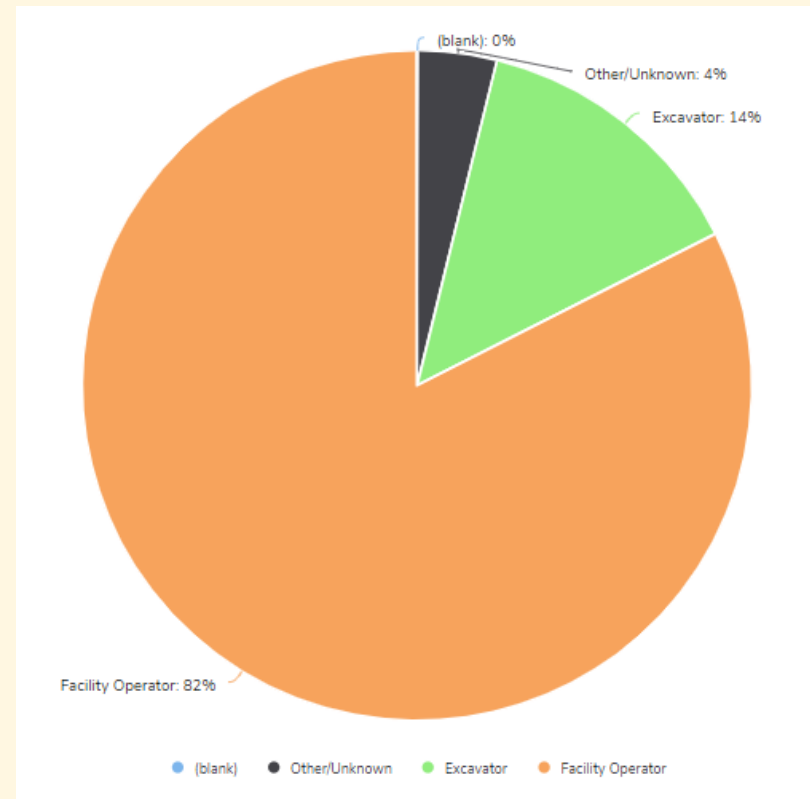
Damage reported by:

**Facility Operators 82%**

- Natural Gas 64%
- Telecommunication 9%
- Electric 6%
- Other Facilities 3%

**Excavators 14%**

**Unknown 4%**





## Locate Requests by Year

Requests for locates fell significantly in 2023 with **35,757 less** submissions than the previous year. Hoping outreach and education in 2024 will drive this data point up again.

Year	Incoming Locate Requests	Outgoing Locate Transmissions	Locate Request Percentage Change (Year to Year)
2019	538,080	4,816,343	0.66%
2020	535,826	4,778,004	-0.42%
2021	555,661	4,872,436	3.70%
2022	524,321	4,524,694	-5.98%
2023	488,564	4,217,674	-7.32%



# Washington's 2023 Root Cause Damage Picture

**One Call Notification Issue** has risen slightly percentage wise, with 35 percent of the 2023 damages incidents siting this root cause. There were 633 reports stating, "No notification made to the one call center", 53 reports that the "excavator dug after a valid ticket expired" and 27 stated that the "excavator dug outside the area described on the ticket."

**Excavation Practices** stayed the same, with 30 percent of the reported damages, with 252 damage reports listing "Improper excavation practices" as the main reason for the damage, 113 stating the "excavator dug prior to verifying the marks (pot-hole)," and another 131 stating that the "excavator failed to maintain clearance."

**Locating Issue – Facility Not Marked** stayed the same, at 19 percent with 275 reports listing the utility was "Not marked due to locator error" and another 43 saying the reason was due to "incorrect facility records/maps."

**Locating Issue – Facility Marked Inaccurately** accounts for eight percent of the damages with 145 incidents stating the facility was "marked inaccurately due to locator error."

**Miscellaneous Root Cause** fell slightly to seven percent damages with 134 reports stating that "root cause not listed." When this selection is made, the submitter is asked to provide a comment. Many times, the comment field will be empty, or the submitter will describe the incident, identifying another root cause that should have been selected. When submitting DIRT reports, the submitter should carefully identify the actual root cause so more relevant information can be analyzed about damage incidents and their cause.

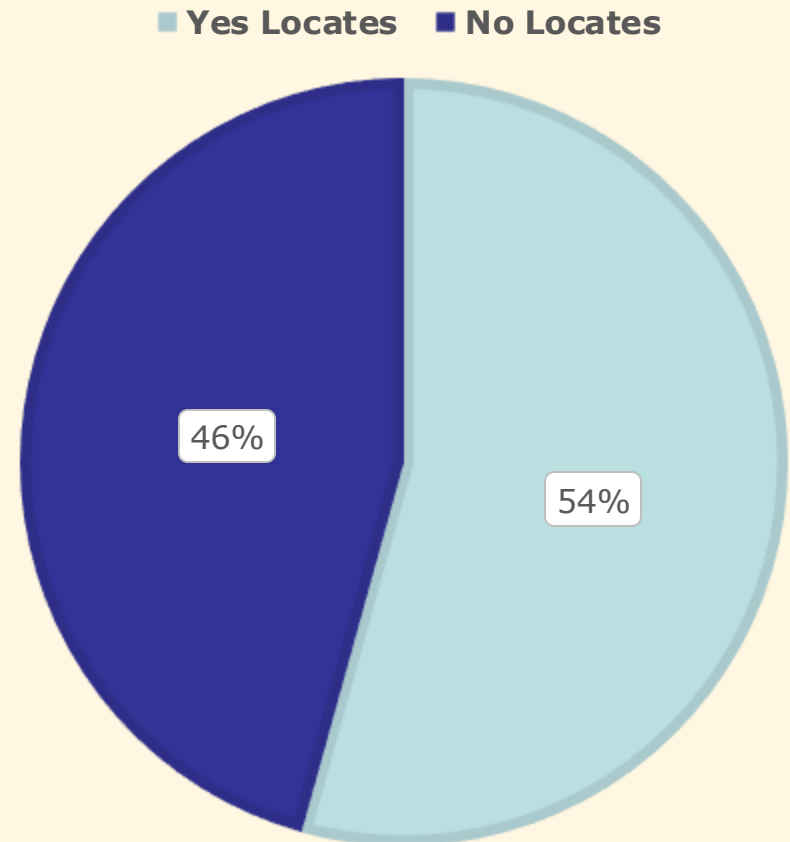
Damage Root Cause	2022	2023
One Call Notification Issue	34%	36%
Excavation Practices Not Sufficient	30%	30%
Locating Issue - Facility Not Marked	19%	19%
Locating Issue - Facility Marked Inaccurately	9%	8%
Miscellaneous Root Cause	8%	7%



## 2023 Locate Requests

Fifty-four percent of the 2,129 DIRT damage reports submitted in 2023, were shown to have a valid locate request made prior to starting excavation.

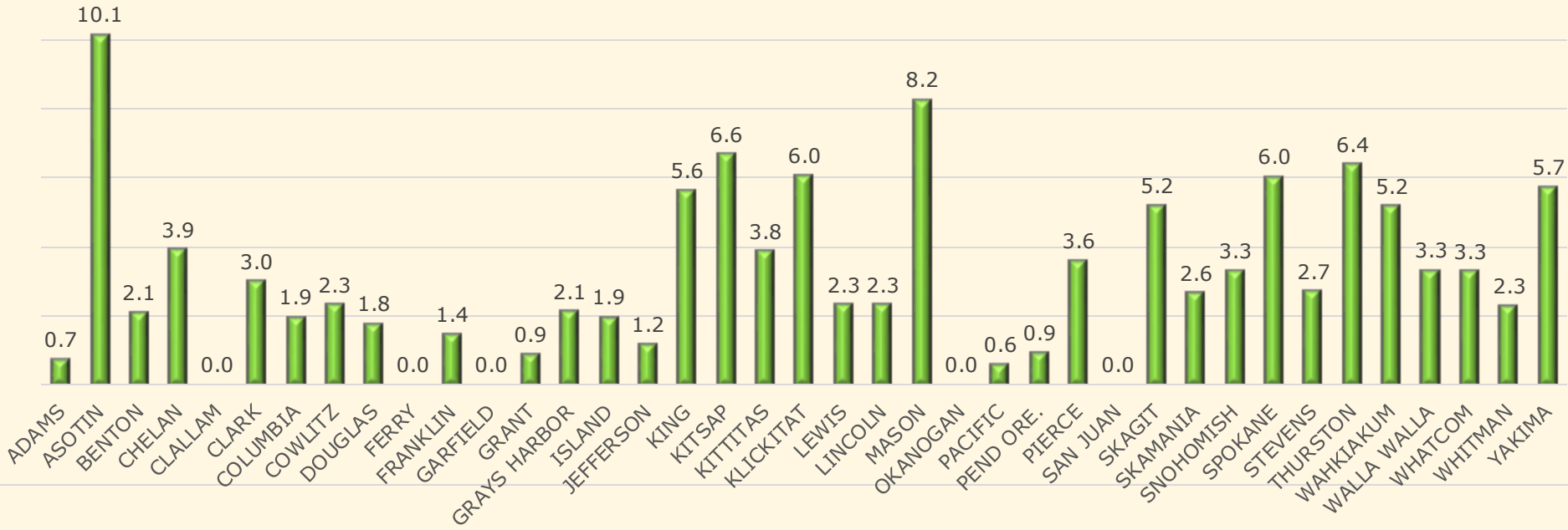
This is a decrease of five percent from last year, and a reminder that more work needs to be done through training, education and outreach about the importance of securing a locate.





# 2023 Damages by County

## Damages by County per 1,000 Locate Requests



The statewide average is **4.4 damages per 1,000 locate requests** in 2023 and is .7 lower than last year's statewide. It should be noted that the numbers for smaller counties may look higher since they have fewer requests for locates and we base the average on damages per 1,000 locate requests.





## 2023 Complaints, Enforcement Actions

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The UTC and the Washington Dig Law Safety Committee (Safety Committee) continued to work together to review complaints, resulting in 11 recommendation referrals to the UTC for investigation. With the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, the Safety Committee has resumed in-person meetings, while offering virtual and call-in attendance options.

In 2023, the UTC sent 355 technical assistance warning letters to 228 professional excavators and 120 homeowners, who damaged natural gas facilities without first securing a valid locate. The number of homeowners causing damage was reduced in 2023 (55 less than last year).

UTC staff also performed 71 additional investigations on parties who violated the dig law by damaging natural gas service without first requesting an underground locate. These violators had also received at least one warning letter.

Total monetary penalties levied by the UTC in CY2023 totaled \$107,500. However, many penalty assessments included an option for full or partial deferral of the penalty amount, provided the offender had no additional violations for one year and/or completed a National Utility Contractor Association (NUCA) Dig Safe training.



# 2023 Training

All fines collected through penalty assessments are deposited into the Damage Prevention Penalty Account which can only be used for educational purposes to improve worker and public safety related to excavation and underground utilities.

We continued to offer online Dig Safe training for all of 2023, (but did not reinstate online locator training). We stopped all in-person training during the busy construction months and brought both in-person Dig Safe training and in-person Locator training back in the Fall.

In 2023, 138 people who enrolled in the NUCA Dig Safe online training earned a two-year certificate. Additionally, in 2023, 532 people attended our in-person NUCA Dig Safe trainings; and 181 people earned a two-year Staking University or Staking University California Utility Locator certificate for completing the two-day course.





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**For questions about this report, please contact:**

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