



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 11: 'PlaySafe, StaySafe'

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 38 companies¹ we represent work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc.

NJUG members need to continue to drive forward further improvements. We have therefore developed the NJUG Vision for Street Works, which revolves around six main principles:

1. Safety is the number one priority
2. Damage to underground assets is avoided
3. Utilities work together and in partnership with local authorities to minimise disruption
4. Utilities deliver consistent high quality
5. Utilities maximize use of sustainable methods and materials
6. Street works in the UK are regarded as world class

This case study is an example of NJUG delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality

Overview:

Northern Gas Networks delivers gas through 37,000km of pipes to 2.6m homes and businesses in the North of England. With their operating partner, United Utilities, they provide the region's gas emergency service and invest more than £60m annually to renew around 530km of metallic gas pipes. Their day-to-day operations inevitably involve digging in streets, pavements and highways, often in the heart of the local community. With safety the number one priority, preventing injuries to members of the public is given constant attention.

As many projects are carried out close to schools a need was identified to raise awareness of the dangers of playing near road work sites amongst the young. The 'Play Safe Stay Safe' programme was developed as a means of presenting fun and interesting safety information to primary schools close to where roadworks are taking place. In addition to this, Northern Gas Networks also delivers a 'Crucial Crew' presentation to over 6,000 junior school pupils every year. These road shows to youngsters about gas safety are held in partnership with other emergency services and utilities and take place in a centrally accessible location where schools from the area spend half a day visiting the various scenarios.

¹ NJUG's current members are Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, Openreach, Virgin Media and THUS, a Cable and Wireless Business. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison, Morgan Est, NACAP, PJ Keary, First Intervention, Carillion, Enterprise and Laing O'Rourke. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-eight utility companies.

Case Study

Northern Gas Networks (NGN) developed the 'PlaySafe, StaySafe' programme in response to the need to target communities with safety messages which are both relevant and timely – during or just before works take place in their neighbourhood. These presentations have also become a key component of their pre-publicity for mains replacement projects. They chose to aim the information at primary and junior age youngsters as it was felt they would be more receptive to the presentation; additionally there is some evidence that safety information received by children is effectively passed on to parents and older siblings. The use of campaign materials and safety road shows in schools is also used as publicity in the local newspapers, therefore helping them to reach an even wider audience.

Design and creativity:

The 'PlaySafe Staysafe' leaflet is the key component of this campaign and is backed up by posters, bookmarks and stickers. Being aimed at children, it was important for the leaflet be written in simple language and contains simple straightforward safety messages. The leaflet is therefore colourful and vibrant, with the first letter of each key message picked out to spell the word SAFETY. This adds a playful touch to a serious information campaign.

Delivery:

Presentations are delivered by employees who act as "ambassadors" for the scheme. Most notable are NGN's customer liaison officers (CLOs), a new role designed to provide support to local people during mains works. The CLOs contact schools in the vicinity of works and offer PlaySafe presentations. These include a talk, a hands-on look at our signs, barriers and safety equipment (which are taken into schools) and the distribution of the leaflets and other materials.

Feedback from schools:

The presentations have been delivered to more than 14,000 pupils across the region. The feedback from teachers has been extremely positive and the presentations are well-received by children. Although it is difficult to quantify the effect of interference damage to site works, anecdotal evidence suggests that projects where there has been a 'PlaySafe Staysafe' presentation in the area, tend to run more smoothly with enhanced community relations.

