



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 5: Improving Street Works Notice Accuracy

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:

P.J.Keary Ltd have supported utility street works activities by providing independent auditing and benchmarking of contractor performance for more than 15 years during which time street works have been subjected to far greater scrutiny by highway authorities, the media and the general public. In 2004 the Traffic Management Act was introduced placing a duty to improve traffic management on local authorities. This duty necessitates a greater reliance on the accuracy of information provided to Highway Authorities either as a notice or permit if the coordination of street works is to be effective. Following feedback from some Highway Authorities, a major utility commissioned a study of notice performance. This study involved comparing notice information held on their job management system with actual site conditions in order to better understand their exposure to FPN.

This case study explains the approach adopted, a summary of findings and how these results were used to improve performance.

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 and Enterprise. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-eight utility companies.

Case Study:

Following feedback from a number of Highway Authorities about noticing errors it became clear that the information held on the utility's own work management system did not always accurately reflect the actual progress of work leading to inaccurate or invalid notices being issued. As a result P.J.Keary enhanced the range of their site audits to include an assessment of notice information against actual site conditions.

The site inspections included validation of location, dates, surfaces disturbed, address point, grid reference, dimensions and other key fields, all of which could potentially incur a fixed penalty charge or lead to a prosecution. Whilst the utility already had performance measures in place on notice compliance within their notice system, the study revealed that there was a further significant area of non-compliance that their notice system could not measure and which could only be understood from site assessment. The findings from this study revealed that notice non-compliance was actually almost twice the level reported by the noticing system. Most of the errors identified were due to human error and process failure. Typically the human errors arose from a lack of understanding of how the system works or data entry errors. The main process failure occurred due to the long delays and the accuracy of data returned from the field to planners, who were responsible for issuing works closed and registration notices.

The issue of timeliness and accuracy of data returned from the field was addressed by the transfer of real time photo images together with text reports providing immediate access to relevant information to enable accurate and timely notice closure. Planners are able to verify the system data concerning the location and extent of the work by reference to the digital images and where discrepancies are identified they are able to validate the information before closing notices. This process provides planners with the confidence that the work has been carried out and that the site is properly clear.

Reporting tools were developed within Kearynet (P.J.Keary real time data management and reporting system) to provide a breakdown of the types of errors and the stage during the process where the errors were occurring. The three key stages used are; work initiation, planning, and field closure. This performance information was used to inform a major programme of awareness training for all staff involved in street works. In addition, Key Performance Indicators were established to track progress and, weekly and monthly performance reports are provided to the responsible managers, who in turn provide briefings to their staff on the learning points raised.

Through continued use of this process performance is fully understood and areas of weakness can be addressed promptly.