



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 67: ENA Utility Strike Avoidance Group Charter

Winner of the NJUG 2012 Avoiding Damage Award

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 38 utility companies and 17 contractors¹ 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. Utilities deliver consistent high quality
3. Utilities work together and in partnership with local authorities and contractors to minimise disruption
4. Utilities keep the public informed on all aspects of works
5. Utilities maximise the use of sustainable methods and materials
6. Damage to the underground assets is avoided

This case study is an example of street works sector delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality.

Overview

The NJUG vision is to embrace changes to the way utilities operate and constantly plan to minimise the impact of works. **Energy Networks Association** have facilitated the development of The **Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG)** Charter to provide guidance to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) on the practical elements of work around utilities and ensure that those working, as well as those employing the workers, are competent and skilled, so helping to prevent damage disruption, injury and raising standards.

Case Study

Avoiding Damage: The Charter has been prepared by industry specialists and is designed to provide practical support to SME's and other organisations by ensuring that high standards of training, competence, planning and systems are implemented.

A competent workforce will be involved in fewer incidents, resulting in less damage. The Charter requires contractors to provide specialist training and competence assessment of workers. This includes the provision of suitable tools and equipment, additional training in the use of cable locating devices and the field assessment of workers in a wide range of core competencies, including the reading of underground service drawings, safe digging techniques and safe systems of work. By providing comprehensive training and assessment, the Charter seeks to encourage change in the behaviour of those engaged in utility work. Evidence from two contractors has proven that implementing competence assessment has reduced damage events and the associated costs.



The charter was launched in London at Energy Networks Association's (ENA) Street Works Event in April 2012. This event was supported and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Norman Baker MP, Transport Minister. Signatories on the day included, Energy Networks Association, Balfour Beatty, North Midland Construction, Southern Water, Northern Power Grid, Veolia Water, South East Water, Clancy Docwra, Western Power Distribution, Heathrow, Daniel Contractors Ltd, Mountstone Group and Morrison Utility Services. There has been significant further

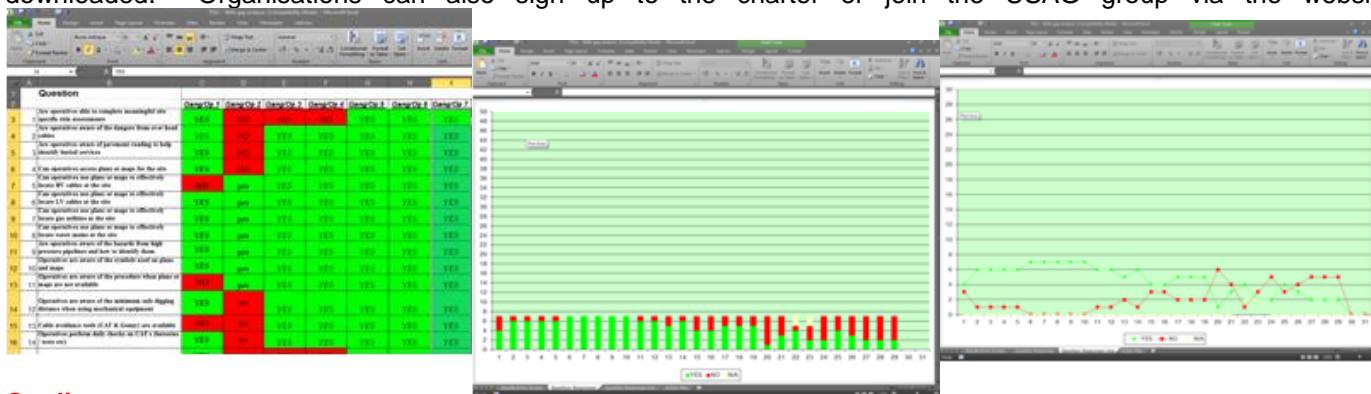
¹ NJUG's current members are Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, BT Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska, Balfour Beatty, Carillion, First Intervention, Laing O'Rourke, Compass, AMEC, Enterprise, Morrison Utility Services, Fastflow Pipeline Services, May Gurney, CLC Ltd, PJ Keary and Murphy Ltd. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-eight utility companies, seventeen utility contractors.

take up and new members are being added. A copy of the presentation can be accessed on the USAG website by [clicking here](#).

Safety: The Charter is designed to encourage all asset owners, their contractors and wider supply chain, to act in a safe and responsible manner whilst carrying out work in and around utility assets. The safety of the general public and those engaged in the works are the number one priority. It is designed to raise awareness and promote high standards in the delivery of work in and around underground assets by bringing together guidance, assessment tools and standard documents as a toolkit. The Charter provides asset owners and their contractors with the ability to ensure that high standards of training and competence are consistently applied across the industry.

The Charter and supporting toolkit refers to safety related legislation and codes of practice and provides a framework for easy implementation. It sets common goals and standards across the industry and is recognised by clients, for example *South East Water*, who now insist their supply chain have signed up to the Charter. The charter requires the organisation to action certain key principles, including awareness and competence, inclusion of the supply chain and thorough investigation of incidents. An example of the charter action is the requirement for training in the use of the cable avoidance tools, in addition to the NRSWA module, as a means of improving competence.

The Charter can now be accessed by the USAG website (www.usag.weebly.com) and the toolkit elements downloaded. Organisations can also sign up to the charter or join the USAG group via the website.



Quality

The Charter and associated toolkit have been designed to ensure that work is properly planned; those carrying out the work are trained and competent and compliance is promoted throughout the supply chain. The Charter provides seven agreed guiding principles that seek to deliver renewed focus on continual improvement the industry. This will be demonstrated by providing higher standards that reduce impact on the community and the associated disruption (e.g. repairs mean excavation open longer) and commercial costs of damage are reduced, along with insurance implications, for example reduced premiums for less damage. The Charter is designed to enable all companies to assess and develop their systems, training and planning regardless of their size. SME's have found that the toolkit is particularly useful in driving improvement within their organisations, by promoting best practice and providing them with practical tools.

Partnership: The Charter has been designed in partnership with key stakeholders, including utility asset owners, contractors and industry bodies including; NJUG, Water UK, ENA and has been endorsed by the HSE.

Philip Wight HSE, Head of Construction said *“(HSE) commend the work of the Utilities Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) in sharing and promoting best practice across the utilities, their contractors and partners to minimize the number of underground utility strikes.”*

Transport Minister Norman Baker supported the launch of the Charter and said during his speech *“The Charter is important, as it will help to reduce delays to the travelling public, while improving standards within the industry”*. He also stated that the Charter supports the Government drive for industry to develop its own standards and thus reduce regulatory burden, in accordance with the red tape challenge.

The Charter assists with improving co-operation and co-ordination, with asset owners and their supply chain, for example, the requirements on the provision of asset drawings, the competence of those reading them and the planning of work, including other preconstruction information. It is therefore a project that delivers improvement at all levels in the supply chain, from client or asset owner to contractor and tier two or three contractors. The requirement in the charter to cascade the process means that all who are involved work to common standards.

