



CASE STUDY NUMBER 82: National Grid Gas – East Midlands Operations Street Works team – 3 Years Saved in 5 Months

WINNER OF THE NJUG MINIMISE DISRUPTION AWARD 2015

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities solely on street works issues. The 42 Utilities and 16 Associates we represent are major contributors to economic growth and 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 seven main principles:

- Safety
- High Quality
- Minimise Disruption
- Keep the Public Fully Informed
- Sustainable Methods and Materials
- Avoid Damage to Underground Assets
- Innovation

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

Overview

3 years saved in 5 months – Reducing Occupation of the Public Highway on Emergency Works (Gas Escape Activity) in East Midlands

The East Midlands Operations Street Works team is always striving for improvement, to demonstrate their support for the NJUG Vision, in proactively reducing highway occupation. In line with the Government's priorities of reducing short-duration works on busy roads where sites are unoccupied at weekends, the team continually reviews these works (predominantly gas emergencies) are managed end-to-end, from receipt of a public reported escape to eventual excavation, backfill, reinstatement and site clearance, restoring the public highway to its full use. Reactive emergency works are complex, as there is little or no pre-planning and often no idea as to what engineering difficulties may be encountered during the repair process and no guide as to how the problem will ultimately be solved. The priority is on safeguarding lives and property.

Case Study

The issue: Delays were highlighted in the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance process being undertaken by National Grid Gas' contract partners and the scheduling tool they were employing. The driver for their work execution was the expiry date of the notice / permit, and therefore sequential working was not always a feature. As a result, sites were left unoccupied, between the completion of the gas activity and the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance operation.

The results: National Grid Gas' innovative, proactive approach to these activities has led to significant changes in day-to-day management, resulting in expeditious completion of works after the gas activity has been completed, as well as a significant reduction of highway occupation. This has been done by encouraging contract partners to undertake the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance operation quicker and by prioritising work on strategic routes, particularly where Traffic Management is utilised.

The solution: Ongoing engagement and dialogue between National Grid's field force and the Street Works team is fundamental to achieving this – from the start of the excavation process, through to the curing of the gas escape, and subsequent request to National Grid Gas' contract partners for the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance operation.



National Grid Gas' Field Force issue the immediate Emergency Notice / Permit, upon work commencement, with a 5-day duration estimate (the historical average for this activity). However, given the complexities of gas escapes, this is very much an estimate, but highway authorities accept this as a 'reasonable period'. Bespoke durations on emergency works have been considered and tested in the past but have ultimately proved unsuccessful due to the complications that can arise from gas escape activities.

Once the gas activity is completed, the field force submits the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance request, to give immediate visibility of the works to National Grid's contract partner, but this contains an original expiry date (5 working days), or the expiry date of an agreed Revised Reasonable Period. National Grid's Street Works team then assess how long the Backfill, Reinstatement & Site Clearance operation should take and give contract partners a realistic and practical timeline given the remaining work content, to complete the works including first time permanent reinstatement and site clearance.

A revised duration estimate is then issued to the highway authority that "The gas activity at the site was completed earlier than expected, therefore the expiry date has been reduced, to lessen occupation of the public highway". This revised reasonable period (the new expiry date) is then notified to National Grid's contract partners. They in turn amend their systems which drives them to complete the works in the revised timeframe or sooner.

Daily teleconference calls are held between National Grid's Street Works team and their contract partners, to confirm that the works expiring on a designated day will be completed on time, and that any works with Traffic Management deployed are being prioritised, particularly Temporary Traffic Control.

Highway Authorities have fully supported this approach. Those operating permit schemes have agreed to consider the waiving of variation fees where duration variations shorten highway occupation.

What have the benefits been?

- Over a 5-month period (April – August 2015) in the East Midlands, the agreed reasonable period has been reduced on **390 jobs saving a total of 1117 days (3.06 years) in highway occupation.**
- The agreed reasonable period was reduced on **174 jobs** that were to span weekends/bank Holidays, resulting in **369 days saved (1.01 years)** on non-working Days.
- A reduction in unattended sites at weekends/non-working days on the busiest streets.
- A reduction in the total number of unoccupied sites, reducing the safety risk.
- Enhanced customer perception and a reduced potential of customer enquiries/complaints being received.
- Reduced risk of signing, lighting & guarding inadequacies being received.
- Manages the expectations of highway authorities and aids highway coordination by freeing up the network sooner.
- Supports the requirement to carry out daily site checks of unoccupied Sites, within the new Safety at Street Works & Road Works Code of Practice.