

# Sudbeck Construction Realizes Results with Proactive Damage Prevention

Digger's Hotline of Nebraska recognizes Rod Jobman, Safety Director with Sudbeck Construction of Omaha, Nebraska as the Stakeholder of the Month for his commitment to safety and underground utility damage prevention. Mr. Jobman, with the support of Sudbeck Companies, has demonstrated how the implementation of damage prevention policies within their company has contributed to a reduction of damages, increased safety and an increased bottom line. Rod's active leadership and participation in the Common Ground of Nebraska and his continued efforts to educate all Stakeholders in underground damage prevention has not only realized positive results within Sudbeck Construction, but has also contributed to sharing the importance of safe digging practices and Stakeholder communication.

The following has been contributed by Rodney Jobman, explaining Sudbeck's journey in realizing the bottom line results through utilization and education of the One Call System and active participation in the Common Ground of Nebraska:

*May 1, 2009*

*Re: Utility Hits*

*It was of great concern to our company when we reviewed the history of our construction operations regarding utility interruptions. It was evident that this problem was impacting our bottom line.*

*As we looked further into the cause of the numerous incidents one thing stood out above all others - no one seemed to understand the ONE-CALL system. Almost every incident failed to have a one-call report in place. In addition to the lack of utilization of one-call, operators seemed to have an attitude that did not support the idea that a "hit" was a major event.*

*Our history of damage included every aspect of buried utilities. We had hit electrical lines, pressurized gas lines, communications, and about anything else that you can bury. The last straw seemed to be when the regional airport was impacted by a cut that took out a critical aircraft warning system.*

*Further review of the incidents also showed that back charges by the utilities were a factor into rather the job was profitable or not. It was time to start paying attention to this situation and see if we could reduce or eliminate the problem.*

*We took actions related to this in several arenas. First we undertook the process of training. Supervisors needed to be reminded of the importance of the one call process and equipment operators had to be trained on the idea that when digging next to marked*

*areas, care had to be taken to avoid damage. We had one incident where the mark was 3” away from a high voltage electrical main line. Again, this was unacceptable and caused major impact on area businesses.*

*The actions taken in addition to education and training included development and enforcement of company policies. Individuals suffered financially by being sent home or terminated. Supervisors were reprimanded as well. Additionally, review of the Common Ground Alliance Best Practices helped to educate what the industry believes and utilizes in prevention. After the incidents decreased dramatically, it came time to start rewarding the efforts. By utilizing a simple t-shirt with a slogan about Digger’s Hotline of Nebraska, we began to reward events that included something as simple as having the area marked and then finding the buried utility, securing it, working around it, and the restoring the area ALL WITHOUT DAMAGE. Even verbal enforcement of positive remarks and the words “THANK YOU” seem to be enough sometimes. We have gone a significant period of time with no damage. It was important to inform our employees of the legal requirements defined in Nebraska Statutes and that the penalties outlined could bring charges against individuals and the company.*

*The next step will be to be even more proactive in our efforts and that will include the issue of “white lining” or white flags. We still seem to have some hesitation to implement that process, but we will continue to try.*

*Another attempt was on our retail side. We developed a pamphlet for homeowners. This brochure is given to customers of our home building division when they buy a new home. It reminds them that property development needs to include a call to 811 before they disturb their lot. We also have become active participants in the Nebraska Common Ground Alliance in support of utility integrity and helping to communicate the needs of the contractor with the owners of underground facilities. This participation has been welcomed by our owners and management and has provided a tremendous opportunity for our company to play a role in the ever important effort to prevent damage, injury, or death from violations of the buried structures.*

*Rod Jobman, Safety Director  
Sudbeck Construction  
16255 Woodland Drive  
Omaha, NE 68136*