

# 2022 End of Year Analysis

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This report by the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) provides a summary and analysis of Washington's 2,683 damage events occurring in 2022, and a brief description about dig law complaints and training. To generate the most accurate analysis of damage events, it is important that damages are reported to Washington's Damage Incident Reporting Tool (DIRT) within the 45-day timeframe set forth in the statute.

The UTC pulls DIRT damage reports once a month, after the 45-day submittal window, using a system to also capture late reports, which may have been excluded in the past.

The UTC also continues to use a flex field in the DIRT reports to provide a designated section for the submitter to give specific contact information about the excavator who caused damage. Prior to the addition of the flex field, contact information could only be placed in the comments section of the DIRT form. Due to this change, the UTC has seen improvements in reporting information, especially related to damage to natural gas without a locate. In addition, the detail in reporting has significantly helped the UTC in its ability to accurately analyze the DIRT data for enforcement, education, and training.

In 2022, the UTC resumed in-person Locator and Dig Safe trainings after putting them on hold for over two years due to Covid-19. Online Dig Safe trainings were offered throughout the entire year. All of these trainings were free to the participant.



## DIRT Form

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The five root cause options on the DIRT form are:

1. Notification Issue
2. Locating Issue - Facility NOT marked
3. Locating Issue - Facility marked INACCURATELY
4. Excavation Issue
5. Miscellaneous

Two problematic issues with the root cause determinations are:

Under Excavation Issue, there is a selection choice of “Improper excavation practice not listed above”(meaning the submitter doesn’t believe the damage cause fits into any of the other categories). Unfortunately, there is no comment requirement to determine what caused the damage, and it is the most used selection in the category.

The Miscellaneous category has an option to choose “root cause not listed” with a requirement to leave a comment. When examining the comments, many times the correct root cause for the damage will correctly fit into another category.



## 2022 Damage Picture

### Damaged Facilities:

- Cable TV: 180
- Electric: 340
- Natural Gas: 1357
- Other: 49
- Telecommunications: 699
- Water: 58





## Locate Requests by Year

Requests for locates fell significantly in 2022 with **31,290 less** submissions than the previous year. This is only the second time in 8 years there has been a drop, and at nearly six percent it is concerning. Hoping outreach and education in 2023 will drive this data point up again.

Year	Incoming Locate Requests	Outgoing Locate Transmissions	Locate Request Percentage Change (Year to Year)
2015	366,320	2,992,222	3.55%
2016	398,003	3,274,468	7.96%
2017	488,242	4,198,115	18.48%
2018	534,550	4,779,815	8.66%
2019	538,080	4,816,343	.66%
2020	535,826	4,778,004	-.42%
2021	555,661	4,872,436	3.56%
2022	524,321	4,524,694	-5.97%



# Washington's 2022 Root Cause Damage Picture

**One Call Notification Issue** has stayed the same percentage wise, with 34 percent of the 2022 damages incidents citing this root cause. There were 745 reports stating, "No notification made to the one call center", 54 reports that the "excavator dug after a valid ticket expired" and 43 stated that the "excavator dug outside the area described on the ticket."

**Excavation Practices** rose a bit to 30 percent of the reported damages, with 261 damage reports listing "Improper excavation practices" as the main reason for the damage, 155 stating the "excavator dug prior to verifying the marks (pot-hole)," and another 143 stating that the "excavator failed to maintain clearance."

**Locating Issue – Facility Not Marked** is slightly lower at 19 percent with 367 reports listing the utility was "Not marked due to locator error" and another 65 saying the reason was due to "incorrect facility records/maps."

**Locating Issue – Facility Marked Inaccurately** accounts for nine percent of the damages with 174 incidents stating the facility was "marked inaccurately due to locator error."

**Miscellaneous Root Cause** fell slightly to eight percent damages with 164 reports stating that "root cause not listed." When this selection is made, the submitter is asked to provide a comment. Many times, the comment field will be empty, or the submitter will describe the incident, identifying another root cause that should have been selected. When submitting DIRT reports, the submitter should carefully identify the actual root cause so more relevant information can be analyzed about damage incidents and their cause.

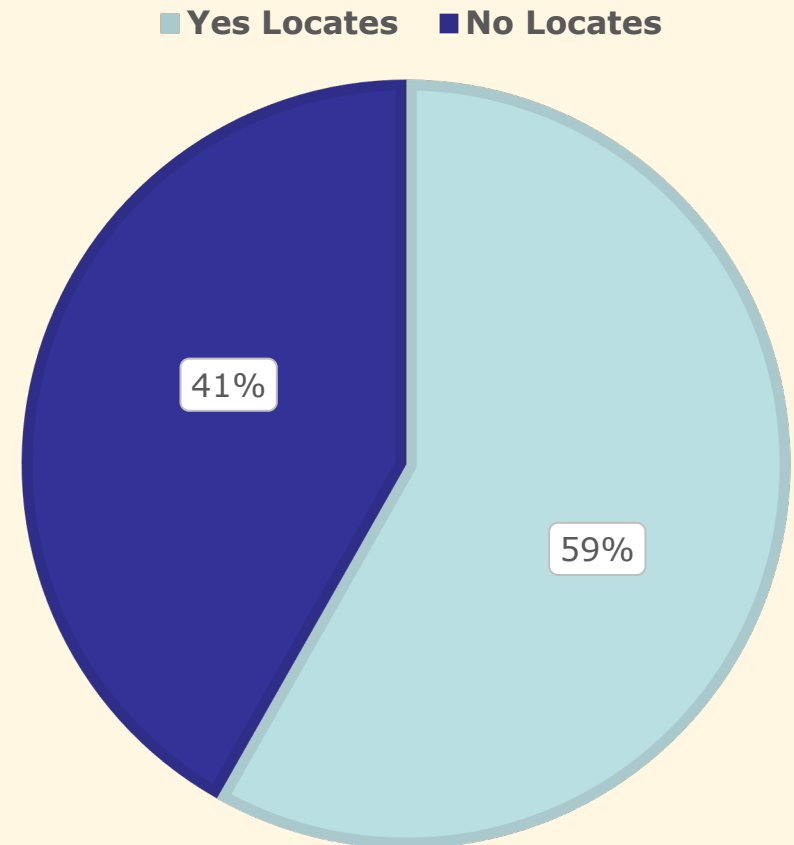
Damage Root Cause	2021	2022
One Call Notification Issue	34%	34%
Excavation Practices Not Sufficient	28%	30%
Locating Issue - Facility Not Marked	20%	19%
Locating Issue - Facility Marked Inaccurately	8%	9%
Miscellaneous Root Cause	10%	8%



## 2022 Locate Requests

Fifty-nine percent of the 2,683 DIRT damage reports submitted in 2022, were shown to have a valid locate request made prior to starting excavation.

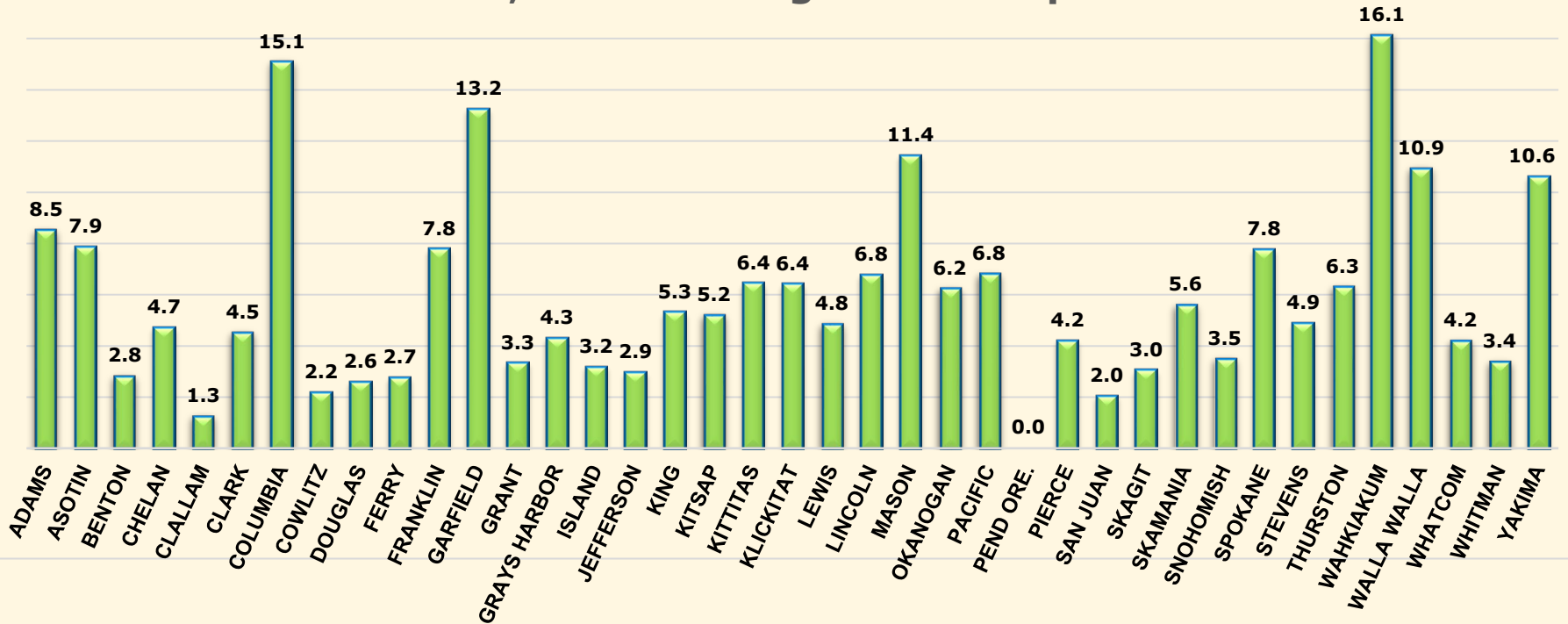
This is a decrease of four percent from last year, and a reminder that more work needs to be done through training, education and outreach about the importance securing a locate.





# 2022 Damages by County

## Per 1,000 Incoming Locate Requests



The statewide average is **5.1 damages per 1,000 locate requests** in 2022 and is .6 higher than last year's statewide. It should be noted that the numbers for smaller counties may look higher since they have fewer requests for locates and we base the average on damages per 1,000 locate requests.



## 2022 Complaints, Enforcement Actions

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The UTC and the Washington Dig Law Safety Committee (Safety Committee) continued to work together to adjust to Covid-19 shutdowns and the inability to hold in-person meetings for most of 2022. The Safety Committee has transitioned to using Zoom and a call-in process to review complaints, resulting in 10 recommendation referrals to the UTC for investigation.

In 2022, the UTC sent 506 technical assistance warning letters to 331 professional excavators and 175 homeowners, who damaged natural gas facilities without first securing a valid locate. The number of homeowners causing damage jumped significantly higher in 2022 (51 more than last year) and could be due to people working on DIY projects throughout Covid-19 quarantine and shutdowns.

UTC staff also performed 84 additional investigations on parties who violated the dig law by damaging natural gas service without first requesting an underground locate. These violators had also received at least one warning letter.

Total monetary penalties levied by the UTC in CY2022 totaled \$60,000. However, many penalty assessments included an option for full or partial deferral of the penalty amount, provided the offender had no additional violations for one year and/or completed a National Utility Contractor Association (NUCA) Dig Safe training.







# 2022 Training

All fines collected through penalty assessments are deposited into the Damage Prevention Penalty Account which can only be used for educational purposes to improve worker and public safety related to excavation and underground utilities.

We continued to offer online Dig Safe training for all of 2022 but suspended online locator training as we were able to resume in-person trainings with four classes offered in April/May. We stopped all in-person training during the busy construction months and brought both in-person Dig Safe training and in-person Locator training back in the Fall.

In 2022, 294 people earned a NUCA Dig Safe online training two-year certificate. In November, 32 people attended our first in-person NUCA Dig Safe training since 2020. And 132 people earned a two-year Staking University or Staking University California Utility Locator certificate for completing the two-day course.





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**For questions about this report, please contact:**

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