

2019 End of Year Analysis



This report provides a summary and analysis of Washington's damage events occurring in 2019, 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 delayed pulling the DIRT information for each quarter in 2019 to allow some extra time for the submitters to report. The end of year analysis is based on the information found in the four quarterly reports and does not include DIRT reports that were grossly late. Additionally, several companies who had not submitted their reports by the deadlines were contacted and given extra time to get their damage information to the UTC.

In 2018 the UTC added a flex field to Washington's DIRT report form. This field was mentioned in the last end of year analysis and is still included 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, detail in reporting has significantly helped the UTC in its ability to accurately analyze the DIRT data for enforcement and training purposes.



DIRT Form

2019 was the second year of using the revised DIRT form. Changes on the form that became effective in 2018 included adding several new categories and a revision of the root cause options. The changes included separating locating issues into two different sections; “not marked” and “marked inaccurately.” The five root cause options 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 new root cause determinations are:

- 1) Under Excavation Issue, there is a selection choice of “Improper excavation practice not listed above” (which means the damage doesn’t fit into any of the other categories). However, there is not a comment requirement to determine what caused the damage, and unfortunately, it is the most used selection in the category.
- 2) Under the Miscellaneous category there is an option to choose “root cause not listed” with a requirement to leave a comment. When examining the comments, there is almost always is another correct root cause for the damage, and the submitter didn’t take the effort or time to find it.

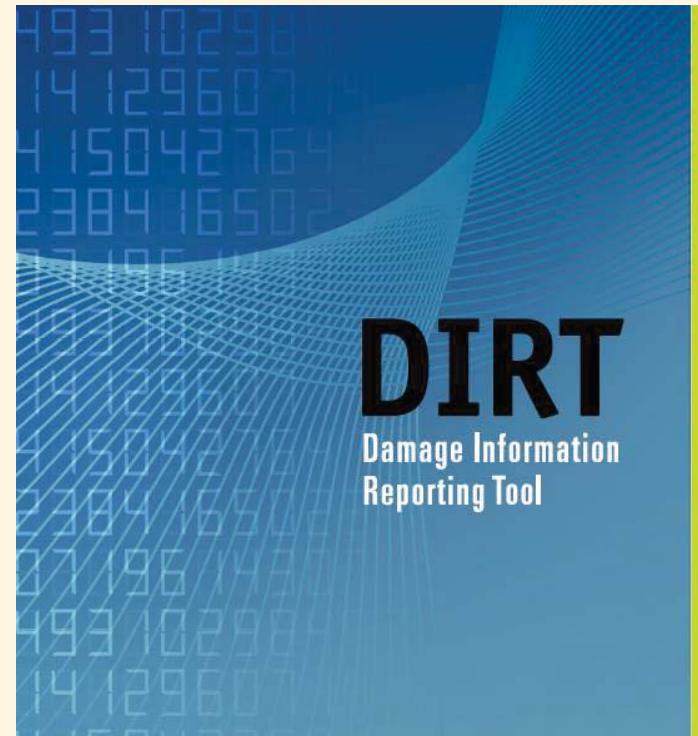


Damage Reporting

2019 DIRT Reports:

Who is reporting:

- Electric: 355
- Excavator: 296
- Natural Gas: 1391
- Public Works: 173
- Road Builder: 51
- Telecommunications: 282
- Other: 25



It should be noted that facility operators and excavators are both required to submit DIRT reports for each damage event, as outlined in RCW 19.122.053(1). There continues to be a lack of duplicate reports in 2019, indicating both the facility operator and excavator are not submitting a report on the same damage. However, excavators submitted 163 more reports over the past year and the highest number thus far.



Damage Picture

Damaged Facilities:

- Cable TV: 228
- Electric: 329
- Natural Gas: 1453
- Other (including Sewer and Liquid Pipelines): 42
- Telecommunications: 377
- Water: 144





Washington's Root Cause Damage Picture

One Call Notification Issue makes up 32 percent of the 2019 damages incidents, with 649 reports stating, "No notification made to the one call center" and 87 reports listing that the excavator dug after a valid ticket expired.

Excavation Issue accounts for 31 percent of the reported damages, with 316 damages reports listing "Improper excavation practices" as the main reason for the damage, and 165 saying the "Excavator dug prior to verifying the marks (by pot-hole)", and 164 stating that the "Excavator failed to maintain clearance."

Locating Issue – Facility Not Marked is at 19 percent of the reports received with 317 damage incidents stating that the utility was "Not marked due to locator error."

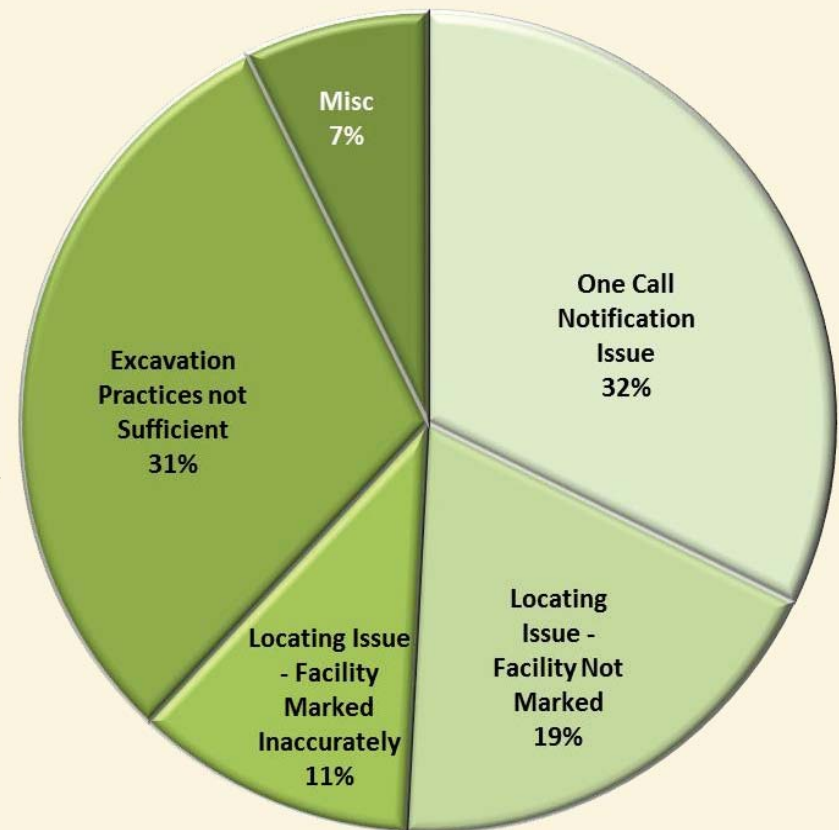
Locating Issue – Facility Marked Inaccurately makes up 11 percent of the damages with 237 incidents stating the facility was "Marked inaccurately due to locator error."

The two locator root causes total 30 percent of the damages by root cause. A frequent complaint is that locators do not respond on time or at all, which could be a contributor to excavators commencing work before markouts are complete.

The two locating categories make up nearly 1/3 of all DIRT reports. The UTC and other stakeholders are watching this datapoint closely to determine what can be done to lower this number. The UTC has hosted locator trainings throughout the state and has been discussing this issue at stakeholder meetings and with locators.

Miscellaneous Root Cause accounts for the last 7 percent of the damages with 155 reports stating that "Root Cause not listed." When this field is selected the submitter is asked to provide a comment on the cause of the incident.

Root Cause of Damage





Locate Requests by Year

Requests for locates have continued to grow each year and 2019 was no exception, with **3,530 more requests** than the previous year.

While the jump was not as large in 2019 as it was in the prior year, it still speaks to the efforts in advertising and education by many different stakeholders. Enforcement actions have also created awareness about the law, related to obtaining locates prior to excavation.

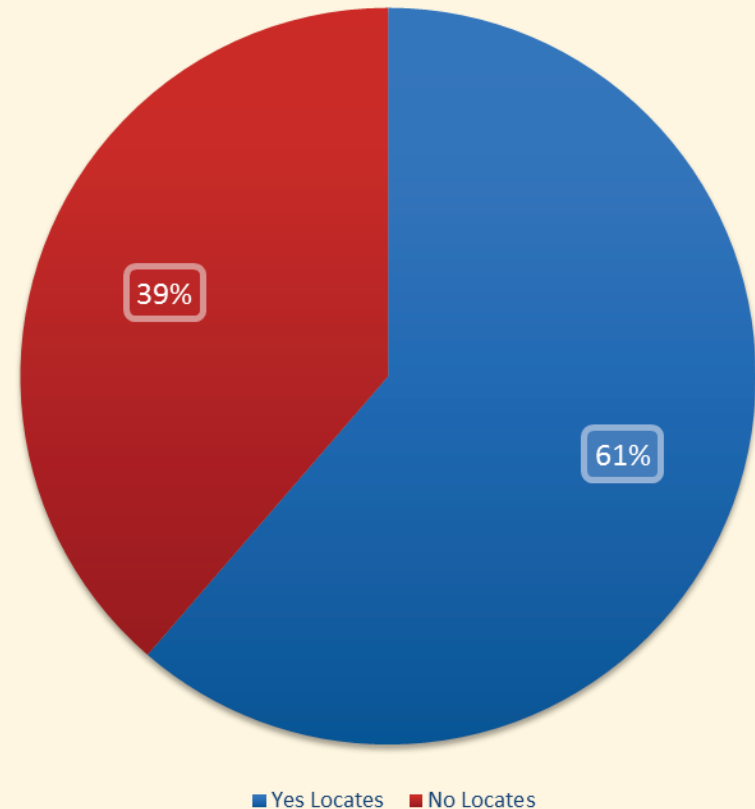
Year	Incoming Locate Requests	Outgoing Locate Transmissions
2014	353,296	2,904,807
2015	366,320	2,992,222
2016	398,003	3,274,468
2017	488,242	4,198,115
2018	534,550	4,779,815
2019	538,080	4,816,343



Locate Requests

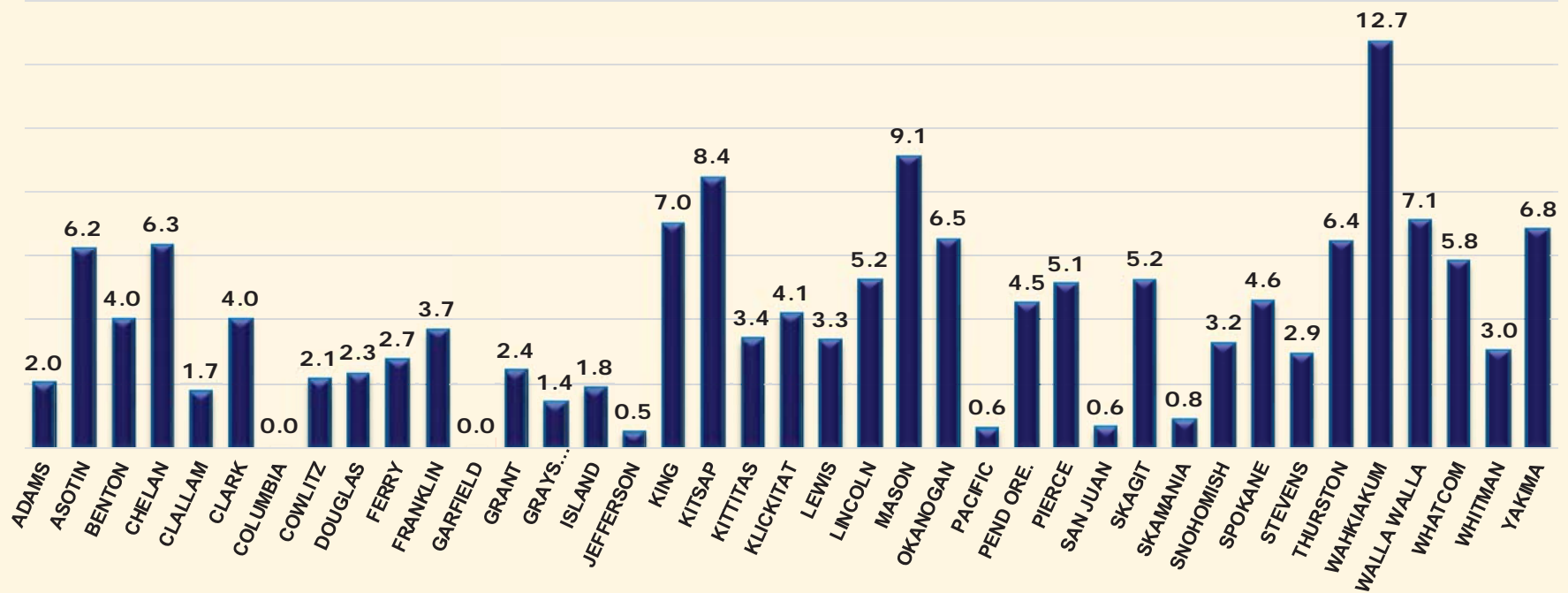
According to the 2,573 DIRT damage reports submitted in 2019, 61 percent indicate a locate request was made prior to excavation. This is an improvement over last year by three percent. Likely due to education, training, enforcement, and advertising by many stakeholders.

Note: This is separate data point from Root Causes. A person may indicate that no locate was performed, and still identify a different root cause for the damage incident. For example in 2019, we found 483 reports stating there was no locate request, yet the submitter used a different root cause for the damage.





2019 Damages by County



In 2019, there was an average of **4.8 damages per 1,000 locate requests** statewide. This is the lowest annual average since we began tracking this data point. In 2015, there were **seven counties** showing over 10 damages per 1,000 locates and this year only two. It should also be noted that Wahkiakum's 12.7 number is the result of having only 236 locate requests and 3 damages. The smaller counties will at times look high due to less requests in their area.



2019 Complaints, Enforcement Actions

In 2019, the Washington Dig Law Safety Committee (Safety Committee) received 89 complaints of alleged violations of RCW 19.122, resulting in 31 recommendation referrals to the UTC.

Safety Committee recommendations to the UTC resulted in penalty assessment orders of \$45,000. Deferrals in the amount of \$26,400 were offered if the violator either completed Dig Safe training and/or had no additional violations for one year.

UTC staff also performed 108 separate investigations of damage to natural gas or liquid pipelines without a locate in 2019, resulting in 55 penalty assessment orders and \$148,500 in penalties. Deferrals were also offered on a few of these penalty assessments provided the excavator incurs no additional violations for one year and/or completes Dig Safe training.

In addition, the UTC sent technical assistance warning letters to 275 professional excavators and 166 homeowners, who damaged natural gas facilities in 2019 without first securing a valid locate.



2019 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 relating to excavation and underground utilities.

The UTC in partnership with the Safety Committee hosted 12 one-day NUCA Dig Safe trainings and 12 two-day Staking University Locator trainings. A total of 24 classes were held, 10 more than in 2018. The statute's limitation on the use of penalty assessments allowed UTC to use these funds to hire instructors. This ensured all trainings are offered to participants completely free of charge. Trainings were held in the following locations:

12 NUCA Dig Safe Training Classes (1-day)

Bothell	Bremerton	Ellensburg	Longview (2)
Renton	Richland	Sequim	Shelton
Spokane	Vancouver	Wenatchee	

12 Staking University Locator Classes (2-day)

Bellingham	Bremerton	Ellensburg	Lacey
Longview	Lynnwood	Puyallup	Seattle
Spokane	Tulalip	Wenatchee (2)	

588 PEOPLE WERE TRAINED IN 2019



For questions about this report, please contact:

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