

Organization's Dedication to Safety is Unparalleled

By Stephen Murdoch and Jim Douglas, C.I.M., P.Mgr.

What started out as a dream has now become a reality. The Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance (ORCGA), an organization dedicated to sharing responsibility in damage prevention, has come to fruition and stakeholders in the industry couldn't be happier. Built on the spirit of shared responsibility resulting from the Common Ground Study, the purpose of this newly created association is to enhance public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of the underground services as a whole by promoting Best Industry Practices in the province of Ontario.

One need only read the ORCGA's mission and vision statements to know that this ideology of safety first rings true. The mission of the ORCGA is to enhance public safety and utility infrastructure reliability through a unified approach to effective and efficient damage prevention. The vision, to be recognized as leading Ontario to be the safest jurisdiction with the most reliable infrastructure in North America. These are strong words from a truly dedicated organization.

Prior to examining what future implications the ORCGA may hold for the industry, it's important to first understand how the concept came into being. In 1997, Ontario One Call and its respective members formed the Ontario Damage Prevention committee. The committee had representation from utility owners and locate organizations. The main purpose of this committee was to analyze facility data provided by the One Call members. This data was in turn used to define target audiences as a means of assisting them with the promotion of "Call Before You Dig" and to provide support in the training of members.

Two years later, in 1999, the "Third

Party Damage Prevention Task Force" was established by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA). This organization analyzed plant damage specifically related to the pipeline industry and gas distribution utilities. The task force was comprised of Enbridge, Union Gas, Council of Ontario Construction Association (COCA), Landscape Ontario, Construction Safety Association of Ontario (CSAO), Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (OSWCA) and the TSSA. The Third Party Damage Prevention Task Force eventually amalgamated with the Ontario One Call Damage Prevention Committee. The relationship helped to reduce fragmented efforts and to align each other's strengths.

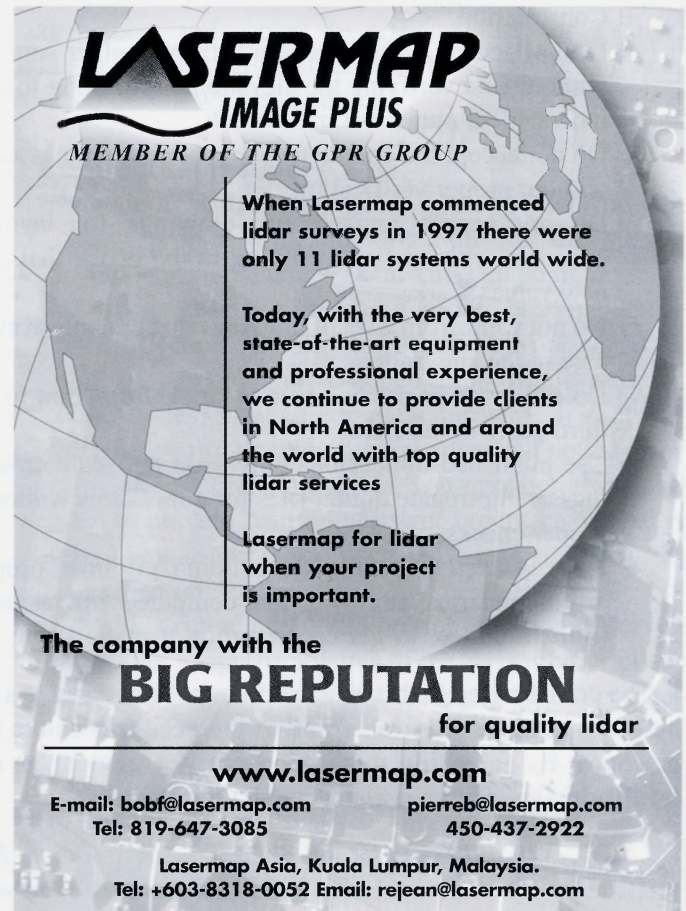
That same year, the United States Department of Transportation sponsored a task force to look into One-Call Systems and Damage Prevention Best Practices. From this, the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) was formed as a task force with the mandate to validate the "Best Practices" in connection with prevention of damage to underground facilities. As the CGA reported its findings, various stakeholders in the industry provided input into the study and validated the "Best Practices" in place in the United States.

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It was at this time that the Third Party Task Force examined the benefits of the CGA structure that was established by their American counterparts. Key stakeholders contended that the benchmark "Best Practices" established by the CGA, although not all encompassing for the needs of the Ontario, should be considered for adoption in this province. An application was submitted to the governing CGA to recognize a new independent chapter to be known as the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance (ORCGA). The ORCGA was formally recognized by the CGA as a partner in April of 2003.



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Since its inception, the ORCGA has successfully developed several Best Practices. These practices represent a dynamic statement of the type of activities that ORCGA believes would provide optimum levels of diligence towards preventing damage to underground infrastructure. Although not all stakeholders are presently in a position to adopt these practices, it is anticipated that progression will be made towards following the practices over time.

According to Jim Douglas, Executive Director of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, the organization needs to continue to build on its initial successes. "We now need to solicit buy-in and participation from all stakeholder groups, ensuring that their voices are heard and that they commit to sharing the responsibility of damage prevention," he explained. "I encourage companies and organizations that feel they could benefit by becoming a member to contact the ORCGA offices," he added.

When asked as to what has played a pivotal role in the ORCGA's growth, Jim is quick to point out the efforts of the organization's three committees; these include the Steering, Functional and Best Practices's Committees. "In the Steering Committee, we have a tremendous group of people who all have a vested interest in the aforementioned topic. "Mike Scarland of TSSA, Wes Armstrong of Union Gas, Sam Morra of OSWCA, Michael Rich of CATT, Brent Fleury of Bell, Jim Teehan of Promark-Telecon and Tatjana Rmus of Enbridge Gas Distribution have all played an integral part in the organization's success. This is also true of the other two committees in which all the participants have contributed a great deal to the ORCGA's success," said Jim Douglas.

Jim Douglas feels that the future success of the ORCGA lies with its membership. "We are always soliciting comments and suggestions on improving our formats. Our intent is to make the statements in these Best Practices as easy to use as possible. All

industry stakeholders are welcome to submit suggestions and to join the Best Practice Committee meetings. Participation at this level is not restricted to ORCGA members," he explained.

Aside from the Steering Committee and Functional Committee, who represent the industry stakeholders and who ultimately approve the best practice, there are also eight subcommittees that developed the industry best practice guidelines. The best Practice subcommittees are each responsible for one of the following Best Practices: Planning and Design, One Call System, Location and Marking, Public Education and Awareness, Excavation Group, Mapping, Compliance and Reporting and Evaluation. Each Best Practice committee is made up of key stakeholders from both private and public enterprises. "The eight Best Practices Committees represent the various industry categories and best of all, decisions are achieved through a consensus basis," said Jim Douglas.

Ultimately, the long-term success of the ORCGA will depend heavily on industry involvement. If the organization is to continue to flourish, it's essential that all parties in the industry make a concerted effort to educate themselves and get involved. If the last couple of months are any indication, the ORCGA will continue to grow and prosper. More importantly, it will remain a viable voice for all those with a vested interest in underground infrastructure.

To learn more about the ORCGA, log on to its web site at www.orcga.com. Here you can learn more about the scope of the various Best Practice Committees. You can also obtain the meeting dates and contact names and numbers for each committee.



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Calendar of Events

February 13 to 16, 2005

2005 GeoTec Event

Vancouver, B.C.

www.geoplacement.com/gt/html/default.asp

February 23 to 25, 2005

AOLS Annual General Meeting

Huntsville, Ontario

www.aols.org

March 1 & 2, 2005

ORCGA Damage Prevention Symposium

Mississauga, Ontario

www.orcga.com/2005_symposium.html

March 6 to 9, 2005

GITA's Annual Conference 28

Denver, Colorado

www.gita.org/events/annual/28/index.html

March 7 to 11, 2005

ASPRS 2005 Annual Conference

Baltimore, Maryland

www.asprs.org/baltimore2005

March 19 to 23, 2005

ACSM Annual Conference

Las Vegas, Nevada

www.acsm.net