



Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG)

2015- 2016 Business Plan

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1.0 Statement of Confidentiality & Non- Disclosure

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2.0 Executive Summary

The Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) is the body established within the utility industry for the purpose of reducing the number and severity of underground utility strikes arising from work activities in proximity to such services. The primary role of USAG is to provide a forum for employers and industry partners to influence and promote improved standards of health and safety within the utility sector. It has become the leading provider of industry knowledge for safe excavation around utilities and as such has been endorsed by both the HSE and IOSH (as detailed in the Appendices). It was the winner of the Innovation award for the NJUG awards in 2012 and the USAG Charter currently has over 150 signatories.

USAG currently operates on a voluntary basis with no direct funding other than the support offered by Member organisations and in particular those who sit on the Steering Group. Whilst there have been considerable achievements with this strategy, to develop the work to extend to wider industry and develop its recognition within the industry would need direct funding. To enable this, there is an opportunity to become a company limited by guarantee in order to enable fundraising to promote its aims and objectives and this will be considered and referenced throughout the document.



3.0 Company Overview & Vision

USAG was formed in 2008 as a collaboration between asset owners, specialist contractors and industry representatives with the intention of reducing the harm caused by the striking of underground utilities.

The Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) is the body established within the utility industry for the purpose of reducing the number and severity of underground utility strikes arising from work activities in proximity to such services. This includes, but is not limited to, construction, demolition, excavation, fencing and streetworks activities. The industry is defined as the electricity, gas, water and telecommunications sectors and is comprised of both direct employers and contractor organisations. Through its activities USAG will promote continuous improvement in managing the health, safety and welfare of both employees and members of the public.

3.1. Terms of Reference

The primary role of USAG is to provide a forum for employers and industry partners to influence and promote improved standards of health and safety within the utility, civil and construction industries.

This will include:

- The development of a consistent approach by all members to ensure that legal duties are complied with as an absolute minimum;
- The sharing and promotion of good practice in all work activities carried out in proximity of utility services;
- The support of industry initiatives and campaigns designed to reduce the incidence of utility strikes;
- The promotion of the reporting and analysis of data to identify any industry trends with a view to developing responsive actions;
- The maintenance of close liaison with other relevant groups within the utility sector;
- The maintenance of close dialogue with HSE and other relevant regulatory bodies and stakeholders as necessary;
- Raising awareness amongst other parties including designers, training providers and equipment manufacturers of Their responsibilities for and influence on the provision of utility services;
- The identification of new and emerging hazards and risks;
- The development and promotion of industry wide programmes and initiatives and relevant guidance as necessary to promote training and skills related issues.

3.2. Past Successes

3.2.1. Charter

One of the first successes of the Group was to set up a charter. This charter was launched in April 2012 by Transport Minister Norman Baker MP who was quoted as saying "The Safe Dig Charter has been compiled by the utilities sectors and contractors to ensure the highest standards of safety and best practice when



carrying out maintenance work on the vital services for our homes and businesses. In particular it will help those carrying out work avoid disrupting supplies through accidental strikes on utilities in the ground"

The charter sets out the seven essential commitments that signatories must make in order to ensure that the risk of harm while undertaking excavation work is reduced. Asset owners who become signatories are sending a very clear and public message that they support and expect adherence to good practice when working on their assets. This encourages contractors working on behalf of utility providers to become signatories and these contractors are, in turn, encouraged to promote the charter throughout their supply chain thus via a cascade effect even the smallest subcontractors are encouraged to make themselves aware of good practice in excavating around buried services.

3.2.1.1. Industry recognition

In 2012 the USAG Charter won the National Joint Utility Group (NJUG) award for innovation. The award was presented to Paul Fidler (ENA) and David Burgess (North Midland Construction) by Norman Baker MP (Transport Minister) and Louise Ellman MP (Chair of the Transport Select committee).

Since the launch the Charter has attracted over 150 signatories, a list of whom can be found in the appendix to this document.

3.2.2. Toolkit

The next step for USAG to achieve its aims was the development of tools that set out best practice. The Group has collaborated with the HSE in the production of the revised HSG47, Avoiding Danger from Underground Services, and has adopted the tools developed by the Best Practice in Avoiding Underground Services (BPAUS). Policies, procedures and forms developed by the leading contractors in the sector are now freely available via the USAG website so that even the smallest contractor can benefit from their experience and knowledge.

3.2.3. Industry coordination

USAG continues to grow and is now forming associations with other groups that had been undertaking similar work in order to become the national resource for advice regarding safe excavation. These groups include the Utility Mapping Group (UMG), Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) and Lend Lease. It is understood that The Joint Utilities Damage Avoidance Forum (JUDAF) is in the process of allying itself to USAG and rebranding as USAG (Scotland).



3.3. Future Aims (/Milestones)

We believe that USAG has been successful in enhancing awareness of utility strike avoidance amongst its members however there are several obstacles that prevent this success from reaching its full potential.

3.3.1. Market presence

Many signatories do not know how much development there has been with regard to the tools and resources available and are therefore are not utilising the resources effectively. Furthermore, there are many parts of the construction industry who are not directly related to the utilities sector but who nonetheless are involved in utility strikes. They are largely unaware of USAG and therefore cannot take advantage of the toolkit.

In order to overcome the obstacles above USAG will require publicity and a means of promoting its aims and resources, as identified in the [Marketing Plan](#).

3.3.2. Deliver the services as identified in the following section

Further details are available in the following section, to include the utility strike report and training and education information as required.



4.0 Services Provided & Operations Plan

4.1. Services Provided

To deliver its aims as identified in this document, USAG will promote the following services:

4.1.1. Toolkit

Continuous development of the USAG toolkit to develop and provide information and guidance on the tools necessary for safe working in the proximity of underground utility services, including Planning, Training, Competency, Permits, Inspection and Record Keeping procedures.

4.1.2. Utility Strike Report

The Utility Strike Report will analyse data of utility strikes from USAG members and other construction partners. The Report will identify asset damage trends and where further improvements can be made.

The 2013 Utility Strike Report has now been issued (July 2015) via upload to the website and circulation to USAG Member representatives for further circulation. Positive feedback has already been received leading to a good appetite for the 2014 Report to build on the conclusions from the 2013 Report.

4.1.3. Training & Competence

The introduction of a national standard of training for safe excavation that will enable contractors to move between contracts or utility suppliers without the need for excessive retraining.

Building on the benefits of collaboration between Asset Owners and Contractors across industry, working with USAG members to develop a more efficient and effective approach to training provision, accreditation, and competence. The working group will work collaboratively with USAG members to improve quality, ensure legislative compliance and ensure the competence of our workforces by:

- Development and use of existing best practice to create common industry specific training programmes, removing the duplication of training as employees move between employers and/ or contracts;
- Raising the standard of training delivery through the USAG's approved training specifications and content;
- Reduce internal overhead costs associated with the management and maintenance of training programmes and records;
- Economies of scale across the footprint on the purchasing of training provision;
- Have a central point of data that confirms the competencies and abilities of individuals and provides employers with a robust mechanism to demonstrate the skills of their workforce.



4.2. Steering Group

In order to deliver the services above, a Steering Group has been established with membership drawn from the Industry to represent the following groups:

- Associations
- Asset Owners (Electricity, Gas, Water, Telecommunications, etc)
- Contractors
- Service Providers

4.2.1. Responsibilities of Steering Group

The listed members of the Steering Group [here](#) will meet regularly to oversee the objectives of USAG and ensure that the group is being run in accordance with its objectives and best practice. Members will possess the appropriate skills, qualifications and knowledge to serve the needs of the group. Representatives of the HSE and other interested third parties will also be invited to attend Steering Group meetings accordingly.

If USAG becomes a company limited by guarantee, the Members of the Steering Group will be guarantors for USAG Ltd and will appoint Directors in accordance with the Articles of Association.

Named individuals from member organisations shall be formally appointed as members or Directors of the Steering Group (with deputies as necessary) to ensure the consistency and debate of the group as a decision making body.

4.2.2. Additional Members

The Steering Group will retain the authority to expand its membership following agreement of all represented parties to ensure it continues to reflect the USAG membership.

4.2.3. Communication of information

Outputs and meeting papers of USAG will be disseminated as widely as possible; all suitable information will be published on the USAG web site and member organisations will be encouraged to provide links to USAG within their own publications and web sites where appropriate.

4.2.3.1. Website (www.utilitystrikeavoidancegroup.org)

Effective use of the USAG website to publish information, promote news and events and issue publications. The website needs to be fully maintained and updated on a regular basis in order to connect and communicate with the industry and ensure that it remains an effective resource for all USAG Members.

The website is currently sponsored by PelicanCorp UK Ltd.

4.3. Governance

USAG will be accountable to the member organisations represented within the group and to the wider membership.

4.3.1. Decision making

Meetings of the group will be deemed quorate for the purposes of making decisions when there is representation from at least one each of an asset



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owner, contractor and interested third party; any decision to then be ratified by the whole group by correspondence.

4.3.2. Frequency of Meetings

The committee will aim to meet not less than four times each year to provide business continuity.

4.3.3. Chair

USAG will be chaired by ENA or a member of the Steering Group in ENA's absence.

4.3.4. Secretariat

ENA SHE Team will provide secretariat and support services to the group to ensure agendas, meetings, outputs and actions are progressed in accordance with the group's aims and objectives.

4.4. Working Groups

USAG has established and empowered relevant Working Groups to carry forward the agreed work programme, and ensure that they operate with clear terms of reference and deliverable objectives.

Working Groups will be set up to meet the needs of the following areas:

4.4.1. Toolkit Development

To achieve the purposes set out under [Services](#) above.

4.4.2. Data and Reporting

To achieve the purposes set out under [Services](#) above.

4.4.3. Training and Competence

To achieve the purposes set out under [Services](#) above.

4.4.4. Communication

To enhance any communication with third parties, members and any other interested parties. The responsibilities are covered further in the [Marketing Plan](#).

4.4.5. Membership

To encourage and respond to any membership request, promoting membership in all cases to ensure that every person who breaks ground is aware of the dangers of underground services and how to avoid them

4.4.6. Website Development

To develop the website to ensure clarity, up to date content, ready availability of all materials for all visitors and possible revenue generation as discussed further in the [Marketing Plan](#).



5.0 Marketing & Communications Plan

5.1. Key Objectives

1. to raise the profile of USAG in the industry
2. to share information and new initiatives with existing USAG Members
3. to encourage more companies to sign up to the USAG charter
4. to raise more funds to further the work of USAG.

5.2. Target audience segmentation and key messages

The table below outlines the overarching 'proposition' for USAG – the reason that organisations and individuals should want to engage with us.

It lists target audiences for USAG (in order of importance, the most important target audience at the top) and messages for each audience type (reading from left to right, the most important for each target audience on the left).

The UK's principal voice for underground service strike avoidance						
	Most important	→→→→→	→→→→→	Least important		
Member organisations	As a member of USAG you have access to industry leading information and support	USAG is the name you trust in the industry	USAG can provide you with practical tools to help you do business more safely	USAG is the voice of safety in the utilities industry		
Potential supporters (larger companies)	As a member of USAG you have access to industry leading information and support	USAG is the name you trust in the industry	USAG can provide you with practical tools to help you do business more safely	USAG is the voice of safety in the utilities industry		
Potential signatories (smaller companies)	As a member of USAG you have access to industry leading information and support	USAG can provide you with practical tools to help you do business more safely	You don't need to be a member to get support			
Media	USAG is the voice of safety in the utilities industry	USAG is at the forefront of safety innovation	USAG can provide spokespeople to speak on relevant subjects	USAG is the name you trust in the industry		
Political	USAG is the voice of safety in the utilities industry	USAG can provide spokespeople to speak on relevant subjects	USAG is the name you trust in the industry			
Public	USAG is the voice of safety in the utilities industry	USAG can provide details of how to work more safely	USAG members are committed to providing less disruption on site / a better image			
Others stakeholder / industry (eg local authorities, HSE)	We can work together to achieve shared aims	There are opportunities to collaborate with USAG to encourage safety within the industry				



5.3. Analysis of other industry bodies

There are a number of organisations in the same sector as USAG looking to achieve similar or complementary aims. These organisations could be key to USAG's success so are listed below, together with recommendations on potential working relationships and enhancing USAG's position in the marketplace:

5.3.1. CECA (Civil Engineering Contracting Association)

The Civil Engineering Contractors Association is the representative body for companies who work day-to-day to deliver, upgrade, and maintain the country's infrastructure.

With more than 300 members split across eight regions, CECA represents firms who together carry out an estimated 70-80 per cent of all civil engineering activity in the UK, in the key sectors of transport, energy, communications, waste and water.

5.3.1.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with CECA.

5.3.2. HSE (Health & Safety Executive)

The HSE was set up to prevent death, injury and ill health in Great Britain's workplaces. They focus their efforts where they will have the greatest impact in driving behavioural change and improving health and safety standards and the annual statistics continue to show that their efforts and those of all of their stakeholders are being effective in driving down the occurrences of death, injury and ill health in the workplace.

5.3.2.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with the HSE.

5.3.3. ICE

ICE has over 80,000 members in more than 150 countries. They support civil engineers and technicians by awarding professional qualifications, ensuring they work to high standards, and helping them to develop their careers. Their work also includes many other activities, from inspiring school students about civil engineering to influencing government investment in infrastructure.

5.3.3.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with ICE.

5.3.4. Highways Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC)

HAUC(UK) brings highway authorities, utilities and government together with the aim of working safely and smartly to reduce the impact of street and road works on members of the public throughout the UK. We as joint chairs of HAUC(UK) work together with our colleagues in the regions and central governments striving to ensure that processes, systems and legislation do not hamper the travelling public whilst we all continue to maintain the essential services that the utility companies and highway authorities provide.

5.3.4.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with HAUC.



5.3.5. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)

A registered charity at the heart of accident prevention in the UK and around the world for almost 100 years. They promote safety and the prevention of accidents at work, at leisure, on the road, in the home and through safety education.

5.3.5.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with ROSPA.

5.3.6. UK Contractors Group

UKCG is the primary association for contractors and their supply chain partners operating in the UK. Together, UKCG members account for a third of construction output in the UK. This provides strength to leverage knowledge, experience and relationships. UKCG works collaboratively with appropriate channels, such as the CBI Construction Council, to ensure their voice is heard by government and society at large.

UKCG and the National Specialist Contractors' Council (NSCC) agreed in June 2015 to a merger of the two organisations to provide a strong collective voice for the contracting supply chain in construction. The new organisation, Build UK, will bring together 28 of the industry's largest Main Contractors and nearly 40 leading trade associations representing over 11,500 Specialist Contractors and will be operational from 1 September 2015.

5.3.6.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with UKCG & Build UK.

5.3.7. National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG)

The UK's only Trade Association representing utilities and their contractors on street works issues, they promote best practice, self regulation and a two-way relationship with Government and other relevant stakeholders. NJUG is also the utility arm of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC(UK)), working collaboratively with roads / local authorities and national and regional governments to drive up standards of road and street works in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

5.3.7.1. Recommendations

Further develop relationship with NJUG.

5.3.8. Assessing the Underworld

Assessing the Underworld (ATU) is an ambitious 10-year research programme largely funded by the EPSRC. The project aims to create prototype multi-sensor devices, and undertake fundamental enabling research, to enable the condition assessment of the three interdependent infrastructures associated with street works – buried utility service pipelines and cables, road and pedestrian pavement structures, and the ground – by combining novel geophysical approaches deployed both from the ground surface and from a robotic device that can be deployed in a pipeline (e.g. a water distribution pipeline). The results of this work will combine with records of the three infrastructures and sustainability assessment methods in a decision support system that will inform engineers and other stakeholders on the most effective approaches to be adopted when engineering in, and beneath, our streets.

5.3.8.1. Recommendations



As Industrial Partners, many of the USAG signatories support the ATU and this relationship should continue.

5.3.9. ADEPT (the Association for Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport)

ADEPT members manage some of the most pressing issues facing the UK today. The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport is an umbrella organisation representing local authority county, unitary and metropolitan Directors responsible for 'Place based' services. Our remits include economic development, transport and communications, planning and housing and the environment. <http://www.adeptnet.org.uk/>

5.3.9.1. Recommendations:

Further develop relationship with ADEPT.

5.4. Communications Plan

Please refer to Excel spreadsheet, which also contains the Media Distribution List.

5.5. Measurement & review

The effectiveness of the marketing campaigns will be reviewed on a quarterly basis at the Steering Group meetings.

5.6. Marketing Campaigns

Listed below are a number of campaigns and ideas to stimulate awareness of USAG, its aims and objectives.

5.6.1. E-marketing

5.6.1.1. Website

To be kept up to date with recent articles and fresh content. The possibility of selling space on the website is to be investigated.

5.6.1.2. E- Newsletter

An electronic newsletter to be sent quarterly/half yearly.

5.6.1.3. Social Media

Using LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter accounts in accordance with the Communications Plan.

5.6.1.4. Training video

Production of video to be hosted online for training recommendations.



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5.6.2. Traditional Marketing

5.6.2.1. 2015 Conference

This event will be open to all members and signatories and will provide an update on the work that has been undertaken by USAG, promote the materials and tools available and present future developments.

5.6.2.2. Industry Events

Attend industry events and conferences for the utility and construction industry sectors. This will involve the production of exhibition materials and flyers for those visiting the stand.

5.6.2.3. Flyers

Production of flyers promoting USAG to be sent to Members, handed out at events etc.



6.0 Financial Plan

Membership of USAG and the use of its publications will remain free of charge. Any organisation or individual will be able to sign up to the charter and use the best practice toolkits free of charge.

Whilst USAG has been successful since its inception and delivered a number of significant results, this has been delivered without any budget with a number of representatives providing their time and resources free of charge. Whilst this can continue, the Steering Group see significant benefits to the group's outputs if more financial resources were available, such as developments in marketing, industry awareness, publications and IT developments.

Whilst USAG will continue to operate in its current form, there is a desire to raise funds from its Members through voluntary donations in order to achieve its enhanced outputs. Such donations will be entirely at each Member's discretion and it is proposed that a model similar to the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) in the United States will be adopted where Members are recognised in tiered (Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze) 'Sponsorships' relating to the size of the donation given.

Another method of raising funds that is to be explored is by raising sponsorship from businesses who may wish to promote their products or services via the USAG website or publications. This could be on a separate basis to the sponsorship model or an element included within a specific level of sponsorship.

For such funds to be raised and accounted for, USAG would become a company limited by guarantee.

The Membership group will be tasked with liaising with the larger Members that have signed up to the Charter and understanding whether the possibility of raising funds through a Sponsorship model is likely to succeed. Once this is known, the full implications will become clear as to what Services USAG will be able to deliver.



6.1. Proposed Expenditure

Below is the indicative proposed expenditure for the 2015-16 financial year, listed in approximate order of priority. This shows a number of things the group wants to do together with some indicative expected cost bandings but will be dependent on the monies raised from the Members (if any):

Item	Sub-item	Cost
1. 2015 Annual Conference Event (based on 150 attendees)	Hire of venue	£0 (provided FOC by Heathrow Airport)
	Insurance	£0 (provided FOC by Heathrow Airport)
	AV equipment hire	£0 (provided FOC by Heathrow Airport)
	Banners and stands	£2,000
	Catering/refreshments	£0 (provided FOC by Heathrow Airport)
	Administration	Maintained in-house via Steering Group subgroup.
2. Sponsorship requests	Brochures to suppliers/sponsors requesting sponsorship	£1,000
	Services of a PR agency	£2,500
3. Administration resource	Co-ordinate comms, book venues, arrange printing and sending of publicity materials	To be provided by contracted party in the event that USAG becomes a company limited by guarantee.
	Accountancy	To be provided by contracted party in the event that USAG becomes a company limited by guarantee.
	Storage of materials/equipment	To be provided by contracted party in the event that USAG becomes a company limited by guarantee.
4. National standard of training	No cost anticipated for year 1	£0
5. Toolkit Development		TBC
6. Web development	1. Provision of independent email addresses	£700
	2. Ownership of domain names	£200
7. Data analysis for 2014 data	Administrative time (30 hours x £20/hr)	£1,000



	IT support time (10 hrs x £40/hr)	
8. Promotion of membership		TBC
9. The production of training materials	Producing educational materials and assessment papers.	£0 (No cost expected in 2015-16)
	Producing educational video regarding the dangers of underground services	£6,000
	Producing educational video regarding recommended excavation techniques.	£6,000
10. Conference Attendance	Printed materials/ banners/ posters for exhibition stands	£1000
	USAG Brochures with printed hand outs	£1,000
	Stand at the Utility Week Conference	£1,850 + expenses, say £2000
	Stand at the Government Construction Conference	£1,350 + expenses, say £1500
	Stand at the Construction Industry Council Conference	£1,350+ expenses, say £1500
	Stand at the Builders Conference	£1,350+ expenses, say £1500
	Presentation media/materials (TVs, tablets)	£500
TOTAL		£28,500 + unaccounted for items say £40,000 in total?



6.2. Proposed Income

Below is the proposed income from sponsorship and other means of fundraising for the 2015-16 financial year:

Item	Sub-item	Value
1. 2015 Annual Conference Event (based on 150 attendees)	Entry Fee 150 people @ £0/head	£0
	Stands/promotion/publicity (based on 5 stands available @ £500 per stand)	£2500 (reduced rate than future expected rate due to uncertainty of attendees).
2. Sponsorship requests	Sponsorship from suppliers or providers of related services for publicity on printed materials	£12,000
	Sponsorship for promotion or advertising via USAG website	£2,000
TOTAL INCOME		£16,500
TOTAL SHORTFALL (Expenditure-Income)		£23,500 (£40,000 Exp- £16,500 Inc)

6.3. Anticipated Shortfall

Depending on the financing model, the shortfall between expected income and spend is shown above would be addressed by the sponsorship income defined above.

USAG in its current form is not able to acquire debts and cannot commit to any costs unless costs are paid on its behalf by a Member or third party. Should insufficient funding be received to achieve all of the aims for 2015-16 then the priority order shown above will apply in order to achieve the maximum impact with the funds (or existing resources by the Steering Group etc) that are available.

With the assistance of an auditor, if USAG was to become a company limited by guarantee, end of year accounts would be produced to provide contributors with details as to what has been achieved with the funds that are raised.



7.0 Appendix – Glossary

Acronym	Description
CECA	Civil Engineering Contractors Association
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
JUDAF	Joint Utilities Damage Avoidance Forum
NJUG	National Joint Utilities Group
UMA	Utility Mapping Association (new group name being developed)
USAG	Utility Strike Avoidance Group
ATU	Assessing the Underworld
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers



8.0 Appendix - Current Steering Group Members

8.1. Steering Group

The Steering Group is made up of a number of individuals from across the Industry including those detailed below:

8.1.1. Mike Leppard, USAG Steering Group Chair, ENA

Safety, Health and Environment Adviser who has worked for the Energy Networks Association (ENA) since 2000, assisting gas and electricity network companies develop a common approach to the management of health and safety, introducing industry wide policies and standards where possible to help improve performance.

8.1.2. Chris Lunn, Training & Competence Group

In 2006 Chris joined South East Water where he is currently the Head of Health, Safety and Quality. Chris is Chartered Member of IOSH and an active member of the Water UK Occupational Health and Safety Group; he was instrumental in the development of industry guidance for the use of chlorine in the water industry. Chris has represented the Water UK Occupational Health and Safety Group at USAG since 2012.

8.1.3. Richard Broome, Data & Reporting Group

Richard is a fully qualified Chartered Surveyor and is the Managing Director of LinesearchbeforeUdig. Richard joined the USAG Steering Group in 2014 and currently sits on the Data & Reporting Group.

8.1.4. Steve Crossland, Data & Reporting Group

Steve is Head of Engineering – Water, Balfour Beatty- Gas & Water. He is a chartered civil engineer that has presented several presentations on the work of USAG, including the Institution of Civil Engineers and Assessing the Underworld.

8.1.5. Bob Hammond

Bob is the Health and Safety Manager Operations at Scottish Power Energy Networks. He joined the USAG Steering Group in June 2014. Scottish Power Energy Networks provide representation on the training and competence group.



9.0 Appendix – List of Charter Signatories

Please refer to the USAG website, where full lists of the Charter signatories can be found at: <http://www.utilitystrikeavoidancegroup.org/charter-signatories.html>.



10.0 Appendix – Endorsements

10.1. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Endorsement

More companies than ever before are now involved in digging holes across the UK. Latest estimates indicate that around 4 million holes are dug each year by utility companies with many more dug as part of construction projects. Third party damage to underground services continues to be a source of danger and financial loss to workers, members of the public, utility companies and contractors.

HSE's mission is to prevent death, injury and ill health and this cannot be achieved in isolation. HSE needs support and help from leaders who are committed to promulgating a common-sense and practical approach to health and safety. We therefore commend the work of the Utilities Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) in sharing and promoting best practice across the utilities, their contractors and partners to minimize the number of underground utility strikes.

Small businesses make an important contribution to Great Britain's economic prosperity. However, they also account for a considerable number of health and safety incidents. That is not to say that SME's are inherently dangerous. Rather, some SME's conduct activities that carry a high level of risk, including excavations.

SME's often find goal-based health and safety management difficult to apply. Finding new ways to help SMEs understand how to comply with health and safety law in a manner proportionate to the risks posed by their work activities is a key priority for HSE

The 'Safe Digging Charter' has been prepared by industry specialists to provide guidance to SME's on the practical elements of excavation. The Charter's supporting guidance documents are simple as well as comprehensive and easy to adopt.

10.2. Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Endorsement

IOSH fully supports this proactive industry-led initiative and wholeheartedly agrees that risk assessment, planning, safe systems of work and competence are all essential for ensuring that digging and excavating are safe.

We need to make sure that all workers involved in excavations avoid accidentally striking the myriad of underground services, including electricity cables and gas pipes. Health and safety professionals are committed to helping employers and workers by raising awareness and promoting good working practices.

The latest HSE guidance 'Avoiding danger from underground services' highlights the devastating consequences of failing to manage such work properly, with workers being killed or seriously injured from striking live underground cables. These tragedies are preventable and IOSH believes we must act to ensure every worker goes home safely at the end of the working day.

The Institution would urge all organisations involved in commissioning or conducting any ground or excavation work to renew their efforts to raise health and safety standards and to sign up to this Charter. We all need to work together to make sure accidental contact with underground services is a tragedy of the past.



Back Cover

www.usag.co.uk