

The Damage Prevention Professional



Utility Safety Partners (USP) is committed to advancing safety, collaboration, and innovation in the utility sector. A key initiative within this mission is the development and implementation of the *Damage Prevention Professional (DPP)* objective — a credentialing and professional development framework designed to standardize and elevate the competencies of individuals working in damage prevention across Canada and beyond.

RATIONALE FOR DPP:

Twenty years ago, the role of ‘Public Awareness Coordinator’ didn’t exist. When the National Energy Board (now Canada Energy Regulator) began to emphasize the importance and regulatory governance of ongoing public awareness programs in its safety audits beginning in the mid-1990s, the role emerged shortly after. More recently, the role of Ground Disturbance Coordinator, Damage Prevention Specialist and Damage Prevention Manager also materialized as utility owners responded to increased emphasis placed on ‘Damage Prevention’ by new legislation (example: the CER’s Damage Prevention Regulations, Ontario One Call legislation) and Standards (example: CSA Z247) and by organizations like The Common Ground Alliance and the Canadian Common Ground Alliance. Despite the emergence and gradual proliferation of these roles, the qualifications upon which industry establishes hiring criteria is generally ad hoc. In parallel, the eligibility factors to secure, maintain and grow into and expand from these roles are equally informal. A defined curriculum, certificate or degree designed to support this critical function and series of roles does not exist. Instead, candidates supporting Damage Prevention roles are based on experience, a certificate or degree in a related discipline such as Engineering or Engineering Technologist, Urban Planning, Land Management, or Canadian Registered Safety Professionals.

The DPP designation would establish a consistent standard for the knowledge and skills required in the field and office environment, providing structured education and training in key areas such as mapping, underground locating, safe excavation, regulatory compliance, crossings, encroachments, and proximity works, Land Administration, stakeholder engagement, communications and awareness, safety, incident investigation, pipeline construction and the overall damage prevention process. Formalizing the DPP role will enhance professional credibility and build trust among employers, utility owners, regulators, and the public. The designation will promote safety by encouraging and advancing best practices and proactive risk management, improve process, reduce the likelihood of damage, and enhance public, worker, and community safety. It will also foster alignment across industries – utility *and* construction - improving collaboration and efficiency. Additionally, the DPP designation will support career mobility and professional development, offering recognition across jurisdictions and a clear path for advancement. With built-in requirements for ongoing education and ethical conduct, the designation will also ensure professionals remain current, competent, and accountable in protecting critical underground infrastructure.

Damage Prevention stakeholders, like the CCGA’s members, will be the largest benefactors of a mature DPP program on multiple fronts. No matter the industry sector, increasingly, senior executives express concern about the challenges of attracting and retaining quality personnel and research within the damage prevention workforce indicates the lack of a recognized designation is a pronounced human resource gap that a mature DPP will address.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DAMAGE PREVENTION PROFESSIONAL

The successful realization of the DPP objective requires sustained leadership, strategic coordination, tactical stakeholder engagement, and proven success in the field of training and curriculum development. Given these complexities, cross-sector involvement, and long-term scope of the initiative, USP created an Executive Director, Damage Prevention Professional position (contract role) to ensure effective program development and execution to deliver a framework that will support DPP program evolution in an orderly manner leveraging program maturity right across Canada, North America and quite likely, engaging damage prevention advocates world-wide.

IMPACT:

Establishing the framework to create the DPP is a long-term commitment with the benefits of doing so unlikely to be realized for five-to-ten years. Financially, the cost to USP Operations is minimal (approximately 2.5% of USP’s current budget), and the Training Standards Committee has committed to invest 50% of the cost for the first year reducing USP’s initial investment to 1.25% of the current budget. The cost of not initiating the DPP objective, however, is significant.

To compare, had Health and Safety governance never been formalized, the Canadian pipeline industry, as an example, would face profound and far-reaching consequences such as:

- Increased workplace accidents and fatalities
- Increased risk of catastrophic failures
- Regulatory and legal chaos
- Severe environmental consequences
- Reduced credibility and public trust
- Weakened workforce development; and
- Economic and operational losses

Although difficult to imagine, Health and Safety management and governance once operated in the same way as Damage Prevention today. The comparison between Damage Prevention governance and Health and Safety governance reveals a clear maturity gap in terms of structure, recognition, and institutional support. While both are essential to safe infrastructure and workplace environments, Health and Safety governance is significantly more developed and institutionalized than Damage Prevention as captured in the table below.

Area	Health & Safety Governance	Damage Prevention Governance
Regulation	Mature, Formalized, Enforced	Fragmented, industry-led
Education & Certification	Established programs and designations	Limited, inconsistent
Professional Status	Widely recognized profession	Emerging, not fully defined
Cultural adoption	Deeply embedded in industry	Still developing, ad hoc
Accountability & Reporting	Standardized and enforceable	Varies by region and governance

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Without a dedicated effort to direct and set a course for the path forward, the various roles supporting Damage Prevention overall will continue to remain ungrounded. By developing standards, formal training, and a professional designation, Damage Prevention can evolve into a mature, recognized discipline improving safety, efficiency, and infrastructure resilience.

The Executive Director will be responsible for piloting the program with a training partner(s) and / or industry sponsor and refine curriculum through feedback, testing and the credentialing process. Once the curriculum is achieved, the Executive Director will market the curriculum for industry acceptance; encouraging utilities and construction companies to require or prefer certification and seek endorsement from organizations and associations like Utility Safety Partners, the Canadian Common Ground Alliance, CAPULC, the Canadian Gas Association, Energy Safety Canada, and others.

As a registered non-profit organization with a 40+ year history and solid financial position, USP is uniquely positioned to fulfill and underwrite this objective and lead the utility industry and damage prevention sector toward a more professional, consistent, and accountable damage prevention culture.