

811: Three-Digit Dialing



“Very simply put, it should be thought of as a speed-dial number to get in touch with a One-Call Center through forwarding the 811 call to their existing 10-digit numbers,” said Bob Kipp, Executive Director, Common Ground Alliance. “A three-digit number is a lot easier to remember than a 10-digit number,” added Kipp.

Various committees comprised of a cross-section of stakeholders support the CGA’s efforts including the 811 initiative. The CGA’s One-Call Systems

International (OCSI) Committee is overseeing the implementation aspect of 811. This includes providing direction and assisting state One-Call Centers as well as telephone companies with implementation challenges and questions.

Implementation efforts are currently underway in many states with at least one, One-Call Center receiving calls over its 811 dedicated phone line. In addition, several phone companies have already made the necessary changes to their network for 811 capability.

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The Common Ground Alliance achieved a significant milestone on March 10, 2005. On this date, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated 811 as the nationwide number for contractors and others to call before conducting excavation activities. Modeled after E-911, this number will connect the caller with the respective one-call center.

The FCC ordered that 811 be operational two years from publication of its designation in the Federal Register. Implementation of 811 is expected to be completed by April 2007. All service providers must assign 811 to be the national abbreviated dialing code for access to One-Call Centers, and discontinue use of other existing dialing arrangements for 811. One-Call Centers must provide their toll-free numbers to carriers to ensure that callers who dial 811 do not incur toll charges.

Currently, One-Call Center specific phone numbers exist for the 71 call centers operating within North America. The intent of 811 is to provide a simple, easy-to-remember number for “Call Before You Dig.” It is anticipated that 811 will not replace current One-Call Center phone numbers but act as an additional number to contact the center.

The CGA Educational Programs & Membership Marketing (ED/MMC) 811 subcommittee will oversee campaign development. There will be a universal roll out of a national 811 awareness program as well as programs targeting specific audiences. The committee will work with qualified vendors and intends to develop a highly recognizable logo and effective marketing campaign. For more information on 811, please visit www.commongroundalliance.com

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To Learn More

- To join or learn more about 811, please visit our web site at www.commongroundalliance.com