**811 BMP Background and Purpose**

The proposed BMP was submitted on behalf of Texas 811 and the City of Austin after presentations to the Texas Water Development Board and the Water Conservation Advisory Council on September 15, 2014, and subsequent discussions with the WCAC Municipal Work Group to promote awareness of and participation in the 811 System as an affirmative water conservation and loss prevention activity.

According to the Common Ground Alliance, a national non-profit dedicated to promulgating best practices to avoid damage to underground facilities, calling 811 before you dig results in facilities being protected from damage almost ninety-nine (99%) of the time.

In March 2005, the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made 8-1-1 the universal number for the 71 regional services that coordinate location services for underground public utilities in the U.S. Before that time, each of these "call before you dig" services had its own 800 number. At one point there were four centers in Texas, there are presently two call centers in Texas which are Lone Star 811 and Texas 811.

Laws and requirements vary from state to state with regard to the operation of one call centers and the duties of excavators and underground utility owners. Damage prevention and the protection of underground utilities is a shared responsibility and utilizing the 811 service is the first step in protecting facilities.

The “811 Call Before You Dig” service helps prevent damage to telecommunications, subterranean power lines, water mains, and natural gas pipes. All professional excavators digging or disturbing ground below 16 inches are required by Texas law to utilize the 811 system. Excavators must call “811” 48 hours before commencing excavation activities in Texas, although there are some exceptions for emergencies. In addition to calling 811, Professional excavators will often directly contact notification centers through online systems or mobile portals to enter excavation information and update or “refresh” tickets.

Utilities in the 811 system are notified by the one-call notification centers about excavation activities that will occur in the vicinity of their underground assets so they can take the appropriate steps to mark and locate facilities, in turn excavators are required by law to undertake certain precautions to avoid damage to utilities. Underground utilities are located via color-coded markings typically up to and not past the homeowner or business’ service connection or meter.

The One Call Board of Texas was created in 1999 by the Texas Legislature to regulate the operations of Texas underground facility notification centers and enforce safe digging law in Texas. The Railroad Commission of Texas also has specific rules and enforcement duties specifically pertaining to Class A natural or synthetic gas, petroleum or petroleum products.

In Texas, all Class A facilities are required by laws to participate in the 811 system. Class A facilities are defined by the Texas Utilities Code 251.002 as an underground facility that is used to produce, store, convey, transmit, or distribute: electrical energy, natural or synthetic gas, petroleum or petroleum products, steam, any form of telecommunications service, including voice, data, video, or optical transmission, or cable television service; or any other liquid, material, or product not defined as a Class B underground facility.

Class B facilities are underground facilities that are used to produce, store, convey, transmit, or distribute water, slurry or sewage. Class B facilities may participate in the 811 system to protect their underground assets, and may also may voluntarily convert that facility to a Class A underground facility by sending written communication from a competent authority of the operator to the One Call Board of Texas advising of the status change. Additionally, Utilities Code 251 prescribes the minimum standards to comply with safe digging law in Texas to include notification, marking and safe digging measures.

Since water utilities are not Class A facilities, they are not afforded the protections of the 811 system unless they voluntarily opt in to the system. However, legal protections in Utilities Code Chapter 251, including the application of safe digging & notification requirements, are conveyed to water utilities who elect to convert to Class A facilities. Participation in the 811 system is a common sense, proven and low cost means to protect underground facilities.

For additional information please see the following.

Texas 811 Presentation to the Water Conservation Advisory Council on September 30, 2015

<http://www.savetexaswater.org/meeting/doc/WCAC_093015_Texas811.pdf>

One Call Board of Texas

[www.onecalltexas.com](http://www.onecalltexas.com)

Texas Utilities Code Chapter 251

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/UT/htm/UT.251.htm>

Texas 811

[www.texas811.org](http://www.texas811.org)

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA)

<http://commongroundalliance.com>