

Best Practice

Inclusion of “811 Before You Dig” Decals on Applicable Equipment Sold in the United States

Best Practice Statement

The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) supports industry efforts to reduce damages to underground utilities and enhance jobsite safety. In support of these objectives, AEM encourages manufacturers to consider following this industry best practice by incorporating a visible **“811 Before You Dig”** awareness decal on equipment that, in the manufacturer's judgment, is commonly used in excavation, ground-disturbing, or utility-sensitive applications in the United States.

Purpose

The purpose of this best practice is to promote underground utility damage prevention by increasing worksite awareness of the national **“811 Before You Dig”** system among equipment operators and jobsite personnel. By placing a visible reminder directly on equipment used for excavation and ground-engaging activities, manufacturers can help reinforce safe digging behaviors, reduce utility strikes, and contribute to safer worksites.

AEM, in alignment with the principles of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Best Practices, supports collaborative industry efforts to prevent damage to underground utilities and enhance jobsite safety.

Background

Damage to underground utilities continues to result in serious injuries, fatalities, service disruptions, environmental harm, and significant financial losses each year. Many of these incidents are preventable when excavators contact 811 prior to beginning work.

Construction and agricultural equipment are frequently used in activities that disturb soil or operate near buried infrastructure. Although equipment operators may not always be

responsible for initiating an 811 locate request, they are the last line of verification to confirm that proper utility-location procedures have been completed before work begins.

Applicability

This best practice applies to equipment for sale in the United States that is designed, marketed, or commonly used for excavation, earth disturbance, ground-engaging activities, or above ground interactions that may potentially impact utilities below the surface.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Excavators, backhoes, graders, and mini-excavators
- Vacuum equipment
- Trenchers and horizontal directional drilling equipment
- Skid steers and compact track loaders with ground-engaging attachments
- Agricultural equipment with soil-engaging implements
- Milling equipment
- Mobile cranes with outriggers
- Handheld equipment (e.g., augers)

Manufacturers should evaluate equipment applications to determine applicability based on reasonably anticipated use near underground facilities.

Best Practice Description

In partnership with CGA, Manufacturers electing to adopt this best practice are encouraged to utilize durable, weather-resistant 811 awareness markings using approved CGA artwork, where appropriate and practicable. The decal should:

- Be placed in a prominent and operator-visible location, such as:
 - Near the operator station or primary controls
 - At cab entry or access points
 - Adjacent to other safety or warning labels
- Be clearly legible to operators and jobsite personnel
- Use CGA-approved 811 graphics and text
- This decal is intended to supplement existing safety markings, operator manuals, and training materials and does not replace any regulatory requirements.

Rationale

AEM and CGA have long recognized that effective damage prevention relies on shared responsibility across the excavation ecosystem, including facility owners, excavators, locators, designers, and equipment operators. Consistent with CGA Best Practices, contacting the national “**811 Before You Dig**” system prior to excavation or ground-disturbing activities remains a fundamental and proven measure to reduce utility damage, injuries, and service disruptions.

Equipment manufacturers play a critical enabling role in this ecosystem. A visible reminder placed directly on the equipment reinforces safe-digging expectations at the moment work begins, helping ensure that proper notification procedures have been completed.

Benefits

Benefits to Equipment Manufacturers

- Demonstrates industry leadership in safety and damage prevention
- Aligns manufacturer practices with national one call and damage prevention efforts
- Supports corporate safety, sustainability, and ESG commitments
- Reduces reputational risk associated with underground utility damage incidents
- Provides a low-cost, high-visibility safety enhancement

Benefits to Contractors and Equipment Operators

- Reinforces compliance with state damage prevention laws and regulations
 - Helps reduce utility strikes, injuries, and fatalities
 - Minimizes project delays, repairs, penalties, and service interruptions
 - Encourages consistent safety messaging across fleets and worksites
 - Reminder of CGA damage prevention principles at the point of excavation
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Implementation Guidance

Manufacturers retain discretion regarding decal size, placement, timing of implementation, product design and coverage, and integration into existing production and labeling processes, but are encouraged to:

- Standardize decal messaging, size, and placement across applicable product lines
- Use CGA-approved logos and artwork

- Integrate decal application into existing assembly or quality control processes
 - Reference 811 and damage prevention concepts in operator manuals or training resources where appropriate
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Target Date and Adoption

This best practice encourages that all applicable equipment manufactured for sale in the United States by August 11, 2027, include a visible “811” decal in recognition of National Safe Digging Day.

Early adoption is encouraged to accelerate industry benefits and demonstrate commitment to damage prevention.

Summary

Including a “811 Before You Dig” decal on applicable equipment is a simple, low-cost action that delivers significant safety and operational value. By adopting this best practice, Manufacturers can help reduce underground utility damage, protect workers and communities, and reinforce a shared responsibility for safe excavation practices.

This document is intended solely as a voluntary industry best practice. It does not establish a product safety standard, legal duty, regulatory requirement, certification program, or design specification. Adoption and implementation remain entirely at the discretion of individual manufacturers.