

New Report: Underground Utility Damage Costs America \$83.2 Billion a Year—Nearly Triple Previous Estimate

Analysis highlights how damage costs spread far beyond direct repairs to disrupt businesses, construction projects and communities

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Damage to the utility lines beneath America's feet costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$83.2 billion every year—more than \$227 million every day—according to a landmark report released today by [Common Ground Alliance](#) (CGA).

The new estimate is nearly three times the widely cited \$30 billion benchmark established in 2019. It reflects the [rising number of damage incidents](#) alongside the most comprehensive accounting of what happens after an underground power, gas, oil, communications, water or other critical utility is struck.

The new report's most striking finding: Repairing damaged utility lines represents just 5.9% of the total economic impact. For every dollar spent on direct repairs, nearly \$16 is lost to consequences such as business interruptions, construction delays, emergency response, road closures, injuries, property damage and community disruption.

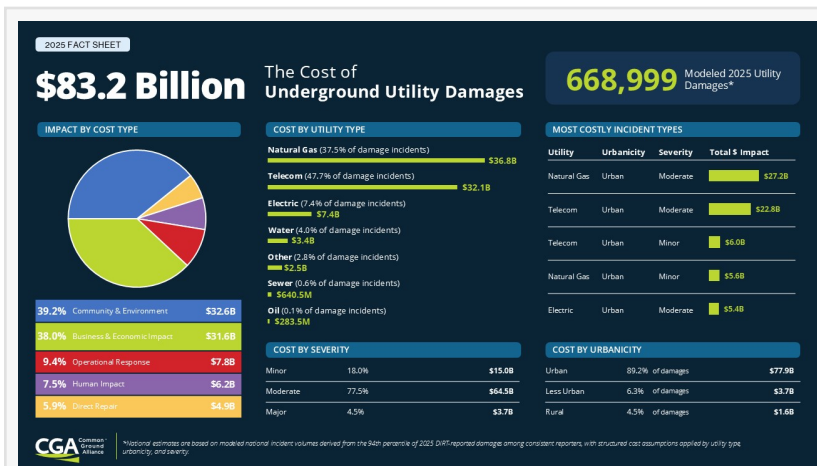
"This is a wake-up call for everyone who builds, operates, protects or depends on America's critical infrastructure," said CGA President and CEO Sarah K. Magruder Lyle. "This first of its kind analysis puts a comprehensive number on the problem. It illustrates the tremendous impact these damages have on communities across the country. An \$83.2 billion annual impact makes clear that underground utility damage is not just an industry problem. It's an economic problem, a public safety problem, a human impact problem and an infrastructure problem that threatens businesses, workers and taxpayers."



Damage to buried utilities costs more than \$227 million every day according to a landmark report released today by Common Ground Alliance. Image © 2026 CGA.

CGA's new report, *Between the Lines: The True Cost of Damages to America's Buried Utilities*, statistically models 668,999 damage incidents in 2025 and measures their consequences across five dimensions: direct repair, operational response, business and economic impact, human impact, and community and environmental impact.

The report arrives as excavation is accelerating nationwide to support broadband deployment, data center construction, energy and water upgrades, housing development and other major infrastructure projects.



This first of its kind study details the true cost of utility damages across five dimensions of impact. Image © 2026 CGA.

“America is investing historic sums in new infrastructure, yet damage to underground infrastructure is creating economic harm on a staggering scale,” Magruder Lyle said. “Every facility owner, excavator, locator, 811 center, developer, homeowner, policymaker and regulator has a stake in reversing this trend. The cost of inaction and accepting the status quo is tremendous and it affects every American.”

“

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*Sarah K. Magruder Lyle,
President & CEO, Common
Ground Alliance*

The repair bill is only the beginning

Of the estimated \$83.2 billion annual impact:

□ \$32.6 billion, or 39.2%, falls on communities and the environment, including property and road restoration, disruption to public facilities, relocation support and

environmental remediation.

□ \$31.6 billion, or 38.0%, comes from business and economic disruption, including outages, lost revenue, delayed projects and reduced productivity.

□ \$7.8 billion, or 9.4%, results from operational response, including emergency services, traffic control, investigations, insurance and regulatory compliance.

□ \$6.2 billion, or 7.5%, reflects human impacts, including injuries, fatalities, medical costs, lost wages and long-term disability.

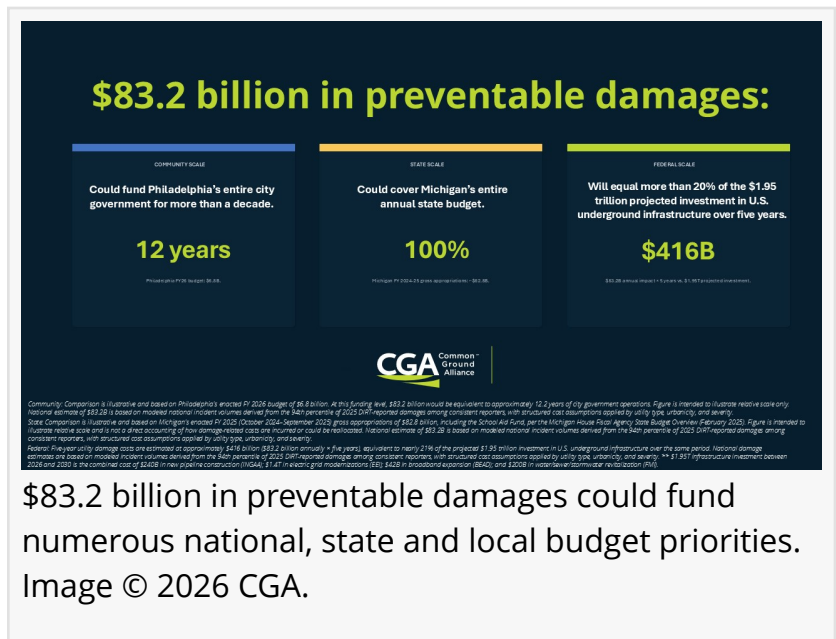
□ \$4.9 billion, or 5.9%, is attributable to direct repair of buried utilities.

Community, environmental and business consequences alone total \$64.2 billion—more than

three-quarters of the overall impact.

The report also reveals that incidents that don't draw national attention result in enormous costs to communities. Moderate incidents represent approximately one-fifth of modeled damages but generate \$64.5 billion—more than three-quarters—of the total economic impact. Damage in urban areas accounts for \$77.9 billion.

Putting \$83.2 billion in perspective



To illustrate the scale of the economic loss, the \$83.2 billion annual economic impact is equivalent in scale to:

- Paying the average electric bill for 48 million American households for an entire year;
- Paying the average natural gas bill for 97 million American households for an entire year;
- 17 months of full federal highway funding for all 50 states;
- The entire combined annual state budgets of Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Hampshire, Vermont, Montana, Maine, and Rhode Island.

Five years of damage could erase one-third of planned grid investment

If annual damage costs remain at their current level, the cumulative economic impact would reach approximately \$416 billion over five years. That's nearly one-third of the entire \$1.4 trillion electric grid modernization investment anticipated from 2026-2030.

Notes on methodology: The report uses a rigorous quantitative modeling framework that combines 2025 data from CGA's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT), modeled national damage volumes, confidential interviews with CGA members and industry executives, publicly reported incidents and government data. Costs were modeled by utility type, incident severity and urbanicity and then aggregated across the five impact dimensions. The \$83.2 billion estimate applies this framework to a higher-reporting scenario derived from the 94th percentile of consistent DIRT reporters, providing a modeled measure of national economic exposure.

The complete Between the Lines: The True Cost of Damage to America's Buried Utilities is available at <https://commongroundalliance.com/Publications-Media/Economic-Impact-Report>.

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