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811
Frequently Asked Questions

Why 811?

Congress directed the FCC to allocate a 3 digit number to allow persons to reach the 60+ one call centers in the United States. The FCC determined that 811 should be allocated to the damage prevention effort in this Country.

When will this take place?

It is already taking place. GSOC is receiving 811 calls now. It is expected that between now and April 2007 every telephone provider in Minnesota will activate 811.

What will happen to GSOC's current number?

Nothing! GSOC will continue to support 651-454-0002 and 800-252-1166 for at least the next 10 years. There are several reasons for this. First, as is described elsewhere, 811 callers will receive a different calling queue. Secondly, both underground facility operators and GSOC have invested millions in promoting the use of the existing numbers. GSOC does not want industry to be forced to modify their current damage prevention efforts. Everything from telephone directories, through markers and pedestals in the field currently display the 651-454-0002 and 800-252-1166 telephone numbers. Industry and GSOC will need to evaluate the long term impact of 811 and how best to integrate it into the overall damage prevention effort. 811 will certainly play a role. Our internet tools, I-TIC and the new I-TIC Lite (a direct homeowner or occasional user version of I-TIC) will continue to provide a better alternative to phoning in locate requests.

GSOC's 811 Development History

In implementing 811, GSOC evaluated several alternatives to develop the best methodology for handling these calls. Ultimately, it was determined that through the use of two new routing or "point to" numbers, GSOC could address two unique challenges created by 811:

1. As with any N11 number, the possibility for a misdialed 911 call exists. An announcement indicates that the caller has reached the one call center and if they are attempting to dial 911 to please hang up and dial 911 again carefully. To: (i) maximize the speed of response time; (ii) prevent one call center personnel from interacting with a person in need of immediate help during an emergency situation; and (iii) prevent the loss of the ANI's that 911 centers need to pinpoint addresses; GSOC has developed a prerecorded announcement at the beginning of the 811 point to number call queue.

2. Because of boundary issues in border areas and the manner in which calls are handled by cellular service providers, the potential exists for calls to be sent to a one call center different from the one the excavator needs. The second vector (after the 911 announcement) is a state-by-state vector.

The GSOC out of state vector does not route the caller directly to the one call center. Instead it provides the 800 number for the state. GSOC is not forwarding the calls simply for cost and capacity reasons.

What are the “Point-To” Numbers?

The two “point-to” numbers for 811 routing are:

866-449-0675	Outstate
651-681-7359	Metro

Please ensure that your company is directing 811 calls only to the above telephone numbers. Do not direct any calls for 811 to the regular GSOC numbers, since they do not address the 911 issues and adjoining state issues. We ask that you confirm the programming of each telephone switches so that the 811 calls are routed to the correct number.

Why are there two numbers?

To save money. Do not route switches within the Greater Metro area to the 866 number. Failure to use the appropriate numbers will increase your costs.

Is there an “advantage” for callers to use 811 over 651-454-0002 or 800-252-1166?

No. Actually, to screen for misdirected 911 calls and for the state vectoring (see above), 811 calls will be slightly longer in duration.

However, both numbers will put callers into a common call queue (or pool) to be answered by the GSOC customer service representative (CSR). Calls will not be answered more quickly one way or the other.

Did GSOC get some funding to implement 811?

No. The FCC ordered the states to implement 811, but asked the states to develop a funding mechanism. Most states have not done so, including Minnesota. GSOC is hoping that telephone carriers will voluntarily comply with the FCC’s order and reprogram their switches to 811. GSOC has voluntarily done its part by developing the vectoring and 911 issues. If we all do our part costs will be minimized. If GSOC were asked to pay a large tariff, we would unfortunately need to consider the circumstances and probably object. Since we were not ordered to pay the telephone companies this could create a stalemate. We hope to avoid this. Our goal is to implement 811 without increasing ticket costs. Lets hope all can work together to accomplish this goal.

Will GSOC stop advertising 651-252-0002 and 800-252-1166?

Frankly we do not know what the long term answer is. Since the period for converting to 811 will extend into the 2007 construction season, GSOC will not launch any major 811 campaign in 2007. We hope to gather input in late 2007 as industry develops its plans as to what

to do for 2008 and beyond. However, even if 811 is advertised by GSOC, it will be done in connection with our other numbers and more importantly I-TIC and I-TIC Lite.

What does 811 have to do with I-TIC Lite?

More than is evident at first blush! 811 is designed as a “consumer” or non-professional excavator based product. It also will be directed at excavators working in multiple states.

GSOC has been working with the homeowner and non-professional excavation market for 20 years. In fact, over 35% of the utilization of GSOC comes from the homeowner or non-professional excavator market. Ironically, many states have discouraged homeowners from calling, their call centers, a specific homeowner outreach campaign, or use a “one size fits all” approach. It is anticipated that 811 will be a big change in those states.

We appreciate industry efforts in Minnesota to assist GSOC in direct to homeowner damage prevention messages. GSOC has distributed hundreds of thousands of its homeowner guides, key chains and coloring books to children. Also, let’s not forget about all those yardsticks given away each year at the Minnesota State Fair. Whether through home shows or rental centers, GSOC works to get out the word.

The new word for homeowners and excavators is I-TIC Lite.

I-TIC Lite is a unique and novel product in the damage prevention industry. I-TIC Lite gives almost anyone access to GSOC 24 hours a day. It is an easy to use, self guiding, web based tool designed to put the locate request process into reach of the homeowner.

We believe that Minnesota is ready for this product. It allows better access than even 811 and we hope you consider mentioning both products together. You can find information about ITIC Lite at www.gopherstateonecall.org.

It’s just another avenue for access to GSOC, and we want to make it as convenient as possible for each and every user. By creating a good experience for them, hopefully they will call or contact every time.

Customer Call Procedures – Another Piece of the Puzzle.

On the topic of creating a better user experience, in 2006 GSOC implemented new homeowner call taking procedures. Both 811 users and callers on our existing number will have their calls processed through these procedures. Each question has been evaluated to logically order the question, reduce “jargon” and tailor the questions to occasional users.

811 – The Next Step.

First, GSOC needs to continue to support the efforts of the telecommunication industry to convert to 811. Then we all need to digest the national roll out of this number. GSOC encourages your ongoing feedback on how you plan on using 811 in your business, so we can support your needs.

Start thinking of your plans for facility markers and advertising in 2008 and beyond and include us in your plans.

For More Information.

Contact GSOC. Our website is www.gopherstateonecall.org. Some of the resources available to you include:

Jim Holzer, GSOC General Manager 651-681-7329. For specific questions on implementation of 811, questions about the point to numbers or activation of 811. jimholzer@gopherstateonecall.org.

Mark Palma, GSOC General Counsel 715-458-4588. For questions related to tariffs, the FCC order, GSOC's implantation of 811, financial concerns and other business questions about 811. mpalma@hinshawlaw.com

Jon Eisele GSOC Director of Public Education 651-681-7303. For questions about promoting 811, I-TIC and I-TIC Lite training and our public outreach efforts. joneisele@gopherstateonecall.org