

## **BOARD POLICY: 1030.00**

### **REDUCED BUFFER POLICY**

**References: Palmetto Utility Protection Service Bylaws, Article II, S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-36-50.**

**Objective:** The Reduced Buffer policy is intended to maintain adequate protection for underground facilities while minimizing the volume of notifications sent to members. This policy will allow operator companies to reduce the mapping site marker tool from 250' to a minimum of 100' based on policy qualifications.

#### **Background:**

Pursuant to Act 48 of 2011 all "Operators" as defined in S.C. Code Section 58-36-20(17) are required to respond in the Positive Response System. In addition, S.C. Code Section 58-36-70 establishes requirements for the operator or designated representative to provide the excavator with the horizontal location and description of all its facilities in the proposed excavation area.

#### **01. Procedure:**

Members must meet all requirements for this service in a series of areas. In addition, they must sign a reduced buffer agreement to begin this process. The application process provides SC811 staff with the information necessary to evaluate the operators' qualifications to implement this cost savings initiative.

#### **02. Modified Buffer Zone:**

During the designated agreement period, SC811 will reduce the standard 250-foot buffer for notifications up to 100 feet for participating members. Notifications will only be sent for excavation activities within 100 feet of the member's facilities, as per the records provided to SC811.

#### **03. Assumption of Risk:**

By participating in the Reduced Buffer Policy, the Member agrees not to hold SC811 liable for any damage to its facilities resulting from using the smaller buffer zone, whether such damage is discovered during the agreement period or thereafter. The Member acknowledges and assumes the risk associated with the use of the reduced buffer zone.

#### **04. Minimum Basic Requirements:**

- a) Members who can provide detailed information on the locations of their facilities may be invited to participate. Operators must have a history of regular intervals (once per year minimum) of service area updates.
- b) SC811 will examine records to ensure the minimum regular updates of members' infrastructure maps are being made to maintain accuracy and quality during the agreement period. Gridded or generalized service area maps will not be allowed to participate in this program.
- c) This process also underscores the importance of timely responses to locate notices to prevent damage to underground facilities and ensure excavator safety. SC811 will also be evaluating an operator's response times to locate notices. Operators must perform above 75% on time response rate to be considered for the reduced buffer program.
- d) Under this policy, operators will also undergo regular performance evaluations, ensuring timely resolution of any complaints or enforcement violations to uphold compliance with the SC811 operational standards.

#### **05. Service Area Grading:**

- a) Implementing the service area grading enables SC811 to systematically evaluate member service areas, identify inaccuracies or overestimations, and initiate corrective measures to optimize notification processes and enhance operational efficiencies.
- b) SC811 utilizes the concept of an inscribed circle, particularly the maximum inscribed circle method from mathematics, to measure the width of each member's buffer. The maximum inscribed circle approach enables the determination of the widest point within a complex polygon, providing an objective measure of service area width.
- c) SC811's process involves reviewing each member's service area to identify the largest circle that can fit within it, thereby measuring the width of the service area. By objectively measuring the radii of the inscribed circles, SC811 can assess the accuracy of service areas based on predetermined standards.
- d) Due to the diverse nature of member facilities and priorities, SC811 has developed a comprehensive metric for assessing service area models. Currently, members are requested to buffer their lines before sending or uploading data to mitigate inaccuracies inherent in digital mapping information. While SC811 has

set requirements for minimum (25') buffer sizes, there are currently no guidelines for maximum buffer sizes, which could lead to potential over-notification issues.

- e) In addition, this process also underscores the importance of timely responses to locate notices to prevent damage to underground facilities and ensure excavator safety. It outlines a targeted approach to evaluating member service areas, prioritizing companies committed to damage prevention and excavator safety while addressing concerns related to response times and eligibility for participation in the service area grading program.

**06. Termination:**

SC811 reserves the right to terminate this service agreement at any time based on the member's qualification, a damage incident, or the expiration of the agreement. This service will automatically terminate after the agreement period ends. However, the liability limitation outlined in paragraph 2 of the agreement will remain in effect, protecting SC811 against claims related to damage occurring during the agreement period, regardless of when such damage is discovered.

**07. Reporting:**

- a) Reports will be provided to operators to see any transmissions that have been suppressed as part of this agreement. It is recommended that it be periodically reviewed to ensure no incidents have been related to this process. This could include damage or errors in infrastructure mapping records.

**08. Training:**

All users updating member mapping records in Exactix are required to [sign up](#) for GIS permission and complete training on "Modifying Service Areas in Exactix."

**DATE APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**BOARD SECRETARY**