

ALABAMA UTILITY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

TIM AYERS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DECEMBER 2023



Director's Comments:

2023 saw another big win for utility infrastructure funding in Alabama. In March, the Alabama Legislature passed a bill for \$660 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to be used for eligible water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure investments. Of this total, up to \$400 million shall be used to improve access to clean water to the citizens of Alabama through investments in water and sewer infrastructure projects and an additional \$260 million to improve and expand broadband throughout the state. These funds are in addition to the \$225 million for water and sewer projects and \$276 million for broadband funding received from Alabama's first round of ARPA relief money awarded in 2022.

The infusion of ARPA funds into the state's infrastructure projects serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it provides an immediate economic boost by creating jobs and supporting local businesses involved in these projects (including many AUCA members). Secondly, it addresses long-standing challenges related to aging infrastructure, ensuring the reliability and sustainability of vital services for residents.

ARPA requires the state to commit funds to its chosen projects by the end of 2024, and to spend the money by the end of 2026. As such, we hope that the upcoming year will see a flood of new opportunities for our members as these much needed projects continue to come to fruition.

With the year drawing to a close, I wanted to express my sincere appreciation to Doug Blankenship from Blankenship Contracting for faithfully serving as AUCA President in 2023. I commend Doug for his friendship and outstanding leadership. As the torch is passed, we look forward to Jay Holcomb from Lambert, Inc. leading us to new heights as our new President in 2024.

I hope that everyone has a safe and Happy New Year!

Tim

2024
HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Upcoming Meetings & Events:

AUCA Industry Lunch Meetings **2024 Dates and Locations To Be Announced**

Charge the Hill - Legislative Awareness Day

**Thursday, March 7, 2024
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

**State House Building
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130**

This is your opportunity as AUCA members to join together in a unified voice to help educate our Legislators on the concerns of the workforce that supplies, installs, and rehabilitates the infrastructure of water, sewer, gas, electrical, broadband, and other underground utility systems throughout Alabama.

AUCA 2024 Spring General Meeting, Golf Tournament and Shrimp & Crawfish Boil

**Thursday, April 18, 2024
Arrowhead Country Club
Montgomery, AL**

AUCA 2024 Fall General Meeting & Sporting Clay Shoot

**October 10, 2024
Lower Wetumpka Shotgun Sports Club
Montgomery, AL**



News & Notes:

AUCA Holiday Lunch Meetings

During December, AUCA members had an opportunity to fellowship at lunch meetings held throughout the state in Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, Mobile & Birmingham.



AUCA 2024 Wall Calendars

We have a very limited quantity of 2024 AUCA Calendars still available. If you would like to receive one, please contact the AUCA office to claim yours before they are all gone.

 Alabama Utility Contractors Association 110 Dryden Avenue Phone: (205) 982-9436 Fax: (205) 982-9155 www.aUCA.org						
JANUARY 2024						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
2024 JANUARY CALENDAR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31						



News & Notes:

AUCA 2024 Scholarship Program:

The application process for our 2024 Scholarship Program is now open. Scholarships will be awarded to applicants that have not previously received an AUCA scholarship. Deadline for submissions will be February 29th, and winning applicants will be selected at the March 2024 AUCA Board of Directors Meeting.

- Scholarships awarded will be worth \$1,500 each.
- Money will be paid directly to the College or Trade School of the applicant's choice.
- Applications are available on the AUCA website:

<http://www.aluca.org/scholarship-program.html>

Application Criteria:

- Must be a resident of Alabama.
- Must be enrolling in, or attending a community college, technical school, or university in Alabama.
- Open to any field of study, but preference may be given to applicants enrolled/enrolling in an engineering or construction-related curriculum.
- Must be either employed by, or have a parent or grandparent employed by a current AUCA member company.
- Cannot have previously received an AUCA Scholarship.
- Application must be received by February 29, 2024.

Contractor's Group Retirement Planning:

BenSource Employee Benefits, an AUCA member company, is staffed to take your call with any questions you may have about starting a retirement plan, or to compare your current plan with the ***Contractor's Retirement Plan***. BenSource can be reached at (205) 536-9204.

Here are just a few of the unique benefits of this plan:

- Eliminates all TPA costs, all audit costs, 5500 costs and document costs
- Greatly reduces employee investment costs - the *power* of group buying
- Eliminates nearly all of the HR tasks typically associated with 401k
- Diverts the significant fiduciary liability away from the business owner

2024 AUCA Membership Dues Renewal:

AUCA 2024 Membership Dues Notices will go out in January. Please be on the lookout for the notice. We appreciate your past support of AUCA, and hope that your company will renew your membership with our group and help us continue to work towards our goals in 2024. We ask that you please return your dues promptly to ensure no disruption in member benefits.



News & Notes:

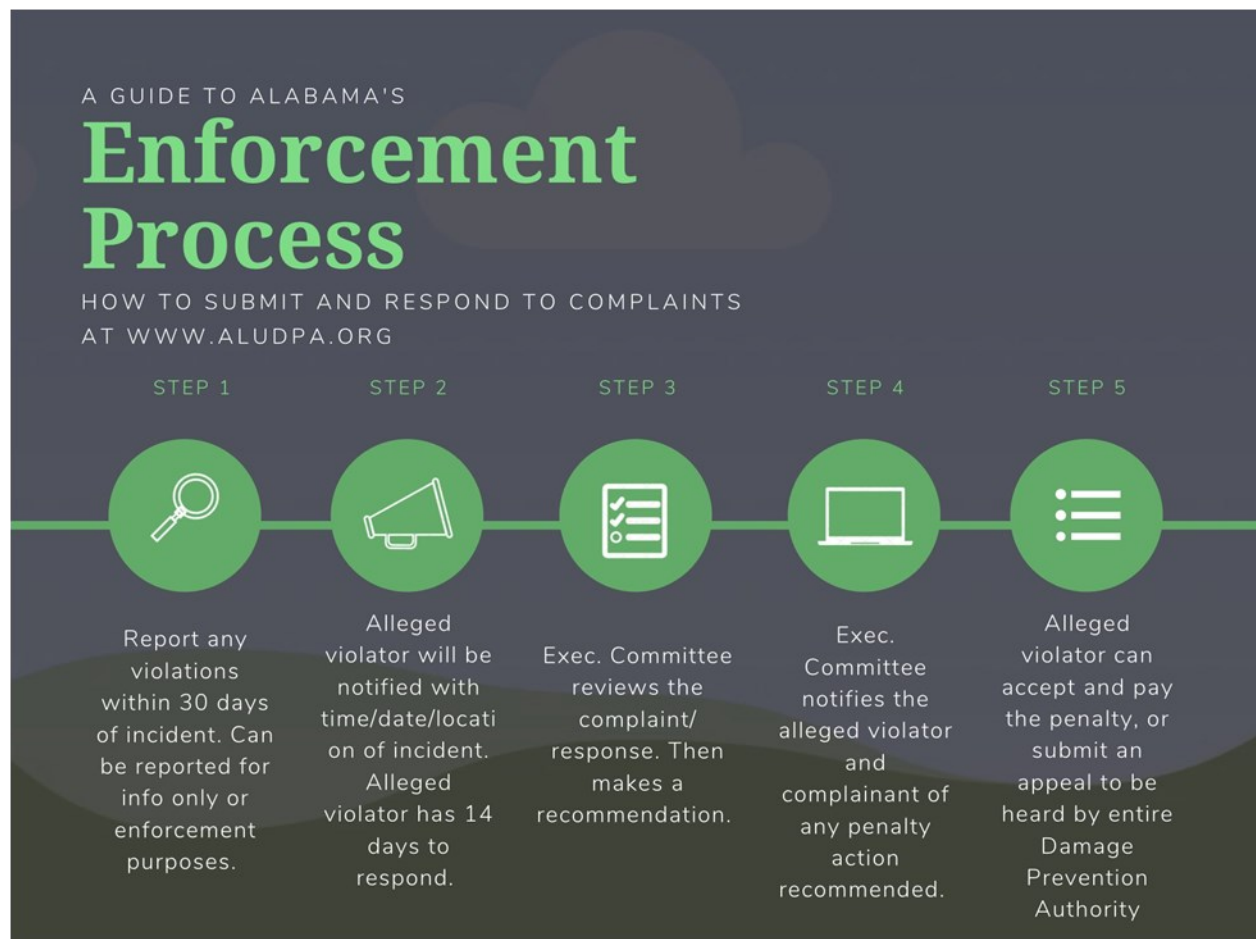
Alabama Underground Damage Prevention Authority (ALUDPA)

The Alabama Underground Damage Prevention Authority (ALUDPA) was established for the purpose of enforcing the Alabama Underground Damage Prevention State Law, for reviewing penalty provisions, and for reviewing the adequacy of the Alabama State Law Enforcement Program.

The Enforcement Program is a complaint-driven process where a complaint may be submitted against an entity for violation of the Alabama Underground Damage Prevention State Law. A complaint may be submitted as information only and not designated for enforcement penalties.



A complaint may be submitted using the Complaint Form [at this Website](#) no later than 30 days after the occurrence of an alleged violation. The submitted Complaint Form is reviewed by the ALUDPA for determination of an alleged violation and for penalty provisions that may apply. The reported violator is then notified by the ALUDPA that a response may be submitted using the Response Form at this Website no later than 14 days after the ALUDPA notification.



TRENCHING SAFETY

5 Things You Should Know to Stay Safe



1 Ensure there's a safe way to enter and exit.

See 1926.651(c)



2 Trenches must have cave-in protection.

See 1926.652(a)

3 Keep materials away from the edge of the trench.

See 1926.651(j)



4 Look for standing water or other hazards.

See 1926.651(h)

5 Never enter a trench unless it has been properly inspected.

See 1926.651(k)



Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

From Ryan Sharpe - Chairman CWCC & Sante Esposito - Key Advocates

December 2023 Insights

FY24 Continuing Resolution

Facing a government shutdown, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) which was subsequently signed into law. While the CR had bi-partisan support, nearly 100 Republicans voted against it because it does not cut spending.

The bill extends government funding until January 19 for several departments, including those that fund WIIN Grants while other departments, including those that fund SRFs, are funded until February 2. All spending is maintained at current levels.

FY24 Appropriations

Seven appropriations bills have passed the House, including for the departments that fund WIIN grants and SRFs; however, all funding is being kept at FY22 funding levels. Two appropriations bills are pending and two were defeated.

In the Senate, all 12 appropriations bills have been approved at the FY23 level by the Appropriations Committee.

SRF Base Allotments and WIIN Grants

Negotiations are underway between the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. The CWCC is advocating for the FY24 SRF baseline funding levels in the Senate bill and opposing funding levels in the House-passed bill.

The House Appropriations bill provides \$1 billion for Clean Water SRFs, which includes a base allotment of \$535 million and \$470 million in earmarks. The Senate bill provides a base allotment of \$1.3 billion and earmarks of \$345 million for a total of \$1.6 billion. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides an additional \$2.6 billion for the Clean Water SRFs.

The House Appropriations bill allots \$460 million in base funding and \$410 million in earmarks for a total of \$870 million. The Senate bill provides \$1.1 billion with a general fund base allotment of \$882 million and earmarks of \$243 million. An additional \$3 billion for the Safe Drinking Water SRF is allocated in the BIL.

Both the House and Senate Appropriations bills provide \$20 million for Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) grants which also will receive \$500 million over five years from the BIL.

House Republican 10-Year Balanced Budget

House Republicans have sought a 10-year balanced budget and passed a budget bill aimed at ac-



Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

(Continued from page 7)

completing this goal through significant spending cuts. This bill has seen no further action in the House and is unlikely to pass the Senate.

Earmark Funding

We are continuing to oppose the use of earmarks to take down baseline funding for the SRFs which has happened during the last two fiscal years. This is contrary to the goals of the BIL and we will continue to oppose this approach.

STREAM Act

The Coalition is seeking a new Senate sponsor to champion the STREAM Act which was introduced by the late Senator Feinstein.

The bill provides \$750 million for surface and groundwater storage and conveyance projects, \$150 million for desalination projects, \$100 million for drinking water projects for disadvantaged communities, and \$250 million for environmental restoration.

Title XVI Funding

The US Bureau of Reclamation announced \$239 million in funding opportunities for Title XVI water reclamation and reuse projects for FY23 and FY24. The application periods close on Dec. 7, 2023 and Sept. 30, 2024

Issues/Bills of Interest

The Coalition continues to monitor and advocate for a number of initiatives, including funding of the Alternative Water Source Program Funding and Mega Recycling Water Projects, and various infrastructure projects.



Fleet Safety:

Provided by Marsh McLennan Agency - Southeast Risk Control Services

Holiday Season Presents Unique Hazards for Drivers

As the holiday season approaches, there are additional situations that fleet drivers will face. In the lead-up to the holidays, roadways will become more congested, especially in retail areas. Colleges and universities will be finishing the semesters and students will be returning home. Public and private schools will begin their vacations as well and school bus traffic will be replaced with additional younger drivers on the roadways. Many people will take saved up vacation from work during this time and cause more traffic congestion.

In addition to the added congestion on roadways, distractions can be a serious hazard. Holiday displays in storefronts, residential yards, or roadsides may cause drivers to look away from the road. Conversations, both in person and on the phone, may distract drivers. Thoughts may be in many different directions removing attention away from the task of driving.

Holiday Safe Driving Tips

An article in Fortune states the following:

"Auto club AAA forecasts that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year's Day. That's 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year." (1)

As a driver of a fleet vehicle, remember that the hazards referenced above are the situations of all those people driving around you and sharing the road with you. Keep the following tips in mind during the holiday season:

- Minimize the distractions you have control over.
- Do not text or dial a cell phone while driving.
- If a phone call is necessary, find a parking lot or safely pull to the side of the road.
- Maintain proper following distance – about 3 to 4 seconds.
- Keep alert to actions of other drivers around you.
- Unless your work requires, avoid congested retail areas.
- Allow other drivers room to make their driving decisions – remember that they may be young drivers.
- Winter weather is a distinct possibility – be prepared for icy roads and slow down.
- Plan your routes and travel with consideration of increased traffic.
- In the immediate days around the holiday, prepare for heavy traffic on the interstates as families travel.
- Ensure you have provisions for emergencies that may include accidents, bad weather, and delayed traffic.



Fleet Safety:

(Continued from page 9)

Don't Forget About Your Own Holiday Travel

The National Safety Council has published guidelines for safe travel during the holidays:

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on [New Year's Day](#), [Thanksgiving Day](#) and [Christmas Day](#), according to [Injury Facts](#). Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

Stay safe on the roads over the holidays — and every day:

- [Prepare your car for winter](#) and keep an [emergency kit](#) with you
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid [drowsy driving](#)
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled
- Put that cell phone away; [many distractions occur while driving](#), but cell phones are the main culprit
- Practice defensive driving
- Designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; [alcohol](#) or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs can cause impairment. (2)

References:

- (1) <https://fortune.com/2023/12/12/busy-2023-us-holiday-travel-estimates/>
- (2) <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday>



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***AUCA IS A MEMBER-DRIVEN, NEEDS
FOCUSED TRADE ASSOCIATION CREATED
SOLELY TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE THE
UTILITY INDUSTRY IN THE STATE OF
ALABAMA.***

**We're on the Web !
www.aluca.org**

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others in your company. And, if you are
receiving this for the company owner,
please print out a copy for him/her.**

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Training Needs**

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