

# Louisiana



2021 Issue 3

8 1 1 M A G A Z I N E S



This issue is dedicated to  
**Locating Gaps**



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from the desk of

## Brent Saltzman



“The show must go on” is a famous quote that many of us have heard and hopefully abiding by nowadays based on our current state of affairs. I’m a positive person at heart so let me share the “good news” regarding our program.

The number of locate requests thus far in 2021 is approximately 10% greater than it was last year. That’s a significant number and we’re elated to see that homeowners and professional excavators are contacting 811 before they dig. The message is getting out and folks are listening to the importance of this first crucial step regarding damage prevention.

I’d like to take a moment and share a success story and some impressive statistics regarding homeowners. As of the end of July, we received almost 2,200 more locate requests from homeowners than last year during the same timeframe. More impressive is the fact that compared to the

same timeframe in 2019, we’ve received almost 6,000 more locate requests from homeowners! Our Public Awareness Committee and our advertising agency have made a concerted effort to focus on homeowner education and it’s paid huge dividends. THANK YOU for your efforts!

One may ask, “How can I contribute to the success of this campaign?” Well, the answer is quite simple in my opinion...talk to your neighbors about the importance of contacting 811 before digging; explain the simple process and what to expect afterward. Best of all, it doesn’t cost the homeowner a dime! It just takes a little planning ahead and the end result is a safer community for all of us.

Please stay safe and let us know how we can help with your damage prevention efforts.

Sincerely,

Brent Saltzman  
Executive Director  
Louisiana 811

# Louisiana 811

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Louisiana 811 is published quarterly.

Roger Cox, Publisher

Individual subscriptions are available without charge in the United States.

To subscribe go to [www.louisiana.811magazines.com](http://www.louisiana.811magazines.com)

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Letters, comments, and articles are encouraged and can be submitted to:

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Louisiana 811

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Mini Conference**  
10/19/21 - 10/21/21  
Alexandria, LA

**Louisiana Gas Association (LGA) Pipeline  
Safety Conference**  
11/1/21 - 11/4/21  
New Orleans, LA

## **Operations Report**

### *Incoming Calls:*

2020 thru July – 419,251  
2021 thru July – 456,588

### *Outgoing Notifications:*

2020 thru July – 2,011,116  
2021 thru July – 2,226,799

### *Call Ratio (In to Out)*

2020 thru July – 1: 4.80  
2021 thru July – 1: 4.88

### *On-Line Ticket Entry*

2020 thru July – 79.99 %  
2021 thru July – 81.39 %

### *Home Owner Tickets*

2020 thru July – 25,842  
2021 thru July – 28,041

## **Welcome New Members Since 2nd Quarter**

3CM Montegut LLC  
American Traffic Solutions/Verra Mobility  
Camellia City Fiber LLC  
Clean Water Inc.  
DT Midstream  
E2 Operating LLC  
Stabilis Solutions  
Town of Ball

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# The way I See it

Louisiana 811 

By Cole Vanderlick  
Manager - Damage Prevention  
Louisiana 811

This issue of Locating Gaps is useful in becoming a safer excavator. The pipeline, utility, and construction industries strive to be as safe of a workforce as any. 811 is one of the first steps in safe excavation, but it is not the last. Some projects may require more steps than others.

While Louisiana 811 has more than 1,000 members, not every utility company in the state is a member. Some municipalities are not members of Louisiana 811, thus not being notified of an 811 dig ticket. It's important to understand which companies are notified from your dig ticket. If an excavator thinks that a municipal utility is in the area of excavation but was not notified from a certain 811 dig ticket, the excavator should notify that utility department directly.

Another example of locating gaps could be excavating on private property, requiring more understanding of how underground facilities are connected. Louisiana law requires utility owners to mark only the lines that they own and maintain. Buried lines usually are marked only up to your meter or to the beginning of your service line. Or, in some jurisdictions, only to the nearest electrical transformer. Almost every homeowner has some type of privately-owned underground utility. What are private utilities? They typically are underground lines that extend beyond the meter or lines not connected to a meter that serve other areas on a property. 811 does not have homeowners' mapping for their privately owned utility lines. 811 only has mapping for what our member pipeline, utility, and facility owners operate and maintain.

You may be wondering how this could affect you. In urban areas, most

meters are connected to the building or a short distance away. If all utilities have metering points connected to the building, then most likely all utilities should be marked on the property from the dig ticket. In many rural areas, the meter could be at the road or a long distance away from the building. Member companies would most likely only be able to mark up to the meter or the area that they maintain and operate. Therefore, the area between the meter and the building would not be marked from an 811 dig ticket. A locating gap could exist. It's important for the excavator to communicate with the property owner about these situations. An excavator should try to gather information from the property owner regarding where these privately owned utilities exist. Excavators should proceed with caution and look out for unmarked lines. It's smart to observe any above ground structures that indicate that an underground facility is near.

A lot of responsibility sits on an excavator's shoulders. Excavators are required to notify 811 a few days prior to digging. If an underground facility is damaged due to excavation, an investigation would determine if this facility was marked from the 811 dig ticket. If it was not marked, should it have been marked from an 811 member company? If the damage occurs where an 811 member owns, operates, and maintains that facility, it should be marked from the dig ticket or the owner should provide information to enable an excavator or demolisher, using reasonable and prudent means, to determine the specific location of the utility or facility. If the damage occurs in-between a meter and the building, or to an underground facility that serves other areas on the property, that area most likely would not be marked from the 811 dig ticket. That area is the private utility, which is owned and maintained by the homeowner. The excavator could potentially be held liable for that damage because the excavator damaged someone else's property. The law does not require a homeowner to provide their underground utility mapping to 811, nor does the law require a homeowner to mark their own private utility lines. An excavator is responsible for the work that they perform, which includes notifying anyone in which they could encroach upon their property. Therefore, an excavator could be held

liable for damaging a homeowner's private utility line without getting that underground facility located.

811 notifies our member utility and facility owners, who mark their underground location or provide the necessary information to the excavator. If excavation will occur where privately owned utilities exist, an excavator or property owner may contact a private utility locator to locate and mark underground utilities in these otherwise unmarked areas.

More examples of Residential Private Utilities include, but are not limited to:

- Electricity to sheds, garages, barns, pool houses, or electric fences
- Invisible dog fences, data cables, landscape lighting
- Water, septic or irrigation systems
- Propane or natural gas run to grills and pool heaters

The following is a list of some private utility locator companies in Louisiana. This list is provided solely to assist property owners or excavators in contacting private utility locators. By using this site or list, property owners or excavators recognize that LA811 does not endorse and is not responsible or liable for any products, goods, or services provided by the private utility locators listed below. Please contact these companies directly for pricing information. Contact information can be found at the below website.

[www.louisiana811.com/excavators/private-locator](http://www.louisiana811.com/excavators/private-locator) 

### Sustaining Members that are private utility locator companies:

- Olameter / Unibar Damage Prevention Group
- SJB Group
- T2 Utility Engineers
- USIC for large plants or industrial sites

Other private utility locator companies:

- Blood Hound Underground Utility Locators
- GPRS
- GT Underground
- Magnolia Construction



# A Change to Louisiana Dig Law

It was once stated that “change is inevitable.” This statement is especially applicable to the Louisiana Underground Utilities and Facilities Damage Prevention Law (commonly referred to as the Dig Law). Yes, the Dig Law has been amended once again with not one but two amendments this last legislative session. We’re only going to address one of the two amendments in this article since the latter will not go into effect until January 2022.


Essentially, what this means for farmers is that they’ll now have an exemption from having to call in a locate request in certain situations and will have a depth exemption in other situations. To be more specific, normal commercial farming operations or activities that do not encroach upon a private utility or pipeline servitude, public right-of-way or a public franchise area don’t require a Louisiana 811 dig ticket. Furthermore, activities that do encroach upon a private utility or

*Senate Bill No. 169... was passed in an attempt to help farmers performing “normal” commercial farming operations.*

pipeline servitude and the depth of the excavation is less than twelve inches in the soil below the existing surface grade don’t require a Louisiana 811 dig ticket either.

It’s important to note that this change in the Dig Law doesn’t prevent a farmer from calling in a locate request. They can certainly do that and it’s encouraged by those of us involved in damage prevention.

There were many meetings between farming representatives, pipeline companies and other utility companies before Senator Allain proposed this bill. Senator Allain actually formed an agricultural study committee comprised of various stakeholders to study this issue and develop the language to be used in his bill.

Louisiana 811 works closely with the Louisiana Farm Bureau and it is our intent to utilize our relationship to educate farmers around the state on this amendment. Time will tell whether or not underground utility and facility damages will increase as a result of this new language but, in my opinion, all parties involved knew some concessions had to be made in order for farmers to abide by the law. 



## ***Don't make a dig mistake***

As an excavator, you have projects to complete and deadlines to meet. But when it comes to working around buried utilities, there’s always time to dig safe. One wrong move can lead to a cut utility line and that means costly project delays, fines and the potential for serious injuries.

At CenterPoint Energy, we’re committed to being your safe digging partner. That’s why we offer no-cost excavation safety training. Our training covers state and federal regulations, identification of underground facilities and excavation safety best practices, all so you can finish your work safely and on time.

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# Membership Offers Huge Benefits

By Brent Saltzman  
Executive Director, Louisiana 811

**A**ttention! Attention! To those municipalities and political subdivisions who aren't currently members of Louisiana 811, I'd like to take a moment of your time and let you know why being a member of our organization is crucial to the protection of your valuable underground infrastructure.


There are several things to consider when joining any organization. One, what's the cost of membership and, two, what am I to gain by becoming a member. I'd like to address each of these valid points individually.

*...the annual  
membership dues  
are only \$100!*

First, the cost of membership is less than you would think. Currently, the annual membership dues are only \$100! That's right, only \$100 to be a member of our organization. The only other cost you would incur from us would be the cost of receiving a locate request for the area you define to be notified. That cost is \$0.72 for each ticket you receive. The good news is that we actually provide folks like you a discount compared to \$0.90 per ticket for our corporate members.

Second, the value of membership is surprisingly huge. Becoming a member enables you, the owner/operator, to receive locate requests for your area allowing you the ability to see who's excavating in your area, what type of work they're performing and for how long.


Have you ever considered, "What's the cost of incurring damage to your underground facilities?" I'm certain the cost can run in the thousands of dollars and, additionally, you have to field all those complaints from many of your constituents who have lost service.

Yes, becoming a member definitely has its benefits. Why don't you pick up the phone and call me today if you'd like to discuss. It's a simple, easy process and I can assure you, membership in Louisiana 811 will be worthwhile! 

# New Louisiana 811 Board Member

Nicole Leveridge  
Kinetica Partners, LLC



**A**s the Manager of Safety, Compliance, Training, Community Relations and Vendor Contracts for Kinetica Partners LLC, I am passionate about ensuring the safety of our employees, contractors and the public. I believe that no job is so important as to sacrifice safety. With more than 50,000 miles of pipeline in Louisiana (according to Louisiana DNR), Calling Before You Dig is an essential safety message. I have worked along with 811 and Kinetica spreading that message for over six years. I am honored to be one of the newest members of Louisiana 811's Board of Directors. I will continue to spread the damage prevention message and hope to aid 811 in this shared goal. To further this goal, I am also a Steering Committee Member for CAMO (Coastal and Marine Operators), which works to prevent underwater pipeline strikes through outreach and education. In addition, I am on the Board of Directors for the Louisiana Pipeliners Association and for LAGCOE. 

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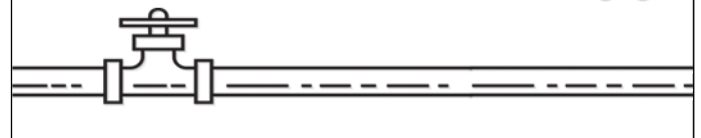
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<https://sjbgroup.exactapplicant.com/>

[jobs/557752.html](https://sjbgroup.exactapplicant.com/jobs/557752.html)





# Locating Gaps Caused b

**A**n argument can be made that the most important part of any underground construction job is one of the first things that should be done: accurately locating the utility lines on time.

There are several factors that can and will impact the locator's ability to achieve the goal stated in the first paragraph. One factor could be the depth of the utility line creating weak signals, bleed-off and a host of technical limitations. It certainly could be staffing issues. One of the complaints I hear most often from excavators is the locating companies need to hire more people. Of course, just hiring more people is not necessarily the answer because the training and experience necessary to turn people

into locators take time... lots of time. So, in that scenario, while you would have people hired, you would not have the productive locators necessary to keep up with the increased call volume demand.

One factor that impacts timely and accurate locates and that often goes unnoticed until it hits the proverbial fan recently came to light while investigating a complaint against a locator submitted by an excavator. The complaint simply stated was that his (the excavator) locate requests were routinely not being responded to in a timely fashion. Upon investigating the complaint, it was determined that the excavator routinely renewed more than 80 locate requests in a subdivision as

allowed by current law. Why renew 80 tickets over and over you ask?

There were a couple of reasons. First of all, that's the way he'd always done it. Nobody had really complained before and because nobody had complained in the past, there was no reason to change his behavior now. And then the second reason was because he wasn't exactly sure where he would be called to work in the subdivision on any given day, his habit was to renew the tickets as required by law, so there would be no delay in getting a new home hooked up to the utilities.

Unfortunately, there was a delay because while the law required locates to be made within 48 hours, it was



# y Lack of Communication

impossible to do so, especially in light of a 20% increase in ticket volume.

So, the excavator was frustrated that his locates were delayed and the locator was equally frustrated because most of these tickets had been located many times and with no apparent end in sight.

Instead of trying to arrive at a solution to the issue, frustration and finger-pointing became the norm, then personalities got involved and when that happens the process usually gets less efficient, and it did.

The threat of enforcement seems to get people to the table but at the end of the day, what keeps them there is


the bottom line. Out in the field, stakeholders are looking for solutions to real problems and oft times the solutions are provided by the same stakeholders looking for solutions.

In this specific situation, it was necessary for a commitment to be made by both parties to one another. "Hey, if I do this, can you do that?" The excavator who wants no delays saw the benefit in changing how he called in locates. The locator saw the benefit in going the extra mile with the excavator who was making a good faith effort to minimize unnecessary work for the locator. These two stakeholders on different sides of the fence created a solution for themselves that might not

work anywhere else or for anybody else and that's ok.

Will there still be frustrations? Of course there will be but they'll continue to work through them because they resolved this one. The first one is always the hardest one and it will build a level of trust that will culminate in respect for one another.

What both were looking for was a solution to an impossible situation. What they found was the solution to their problem that nobody else could provide.

Hey, if the mountain were smooth, you couldn't climb it. What are you looking for? 

Keep up with the latest from

# Louisiana 811



# Just One Excavator's

# PERSPECTIVE



By Roger Cox  
ACTS Now, Inc.

I recently visited with Trey Crawford, Vice President of Grady Crawford Construction headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Grady Crawford Construction has worked as a utility contractor for more than 48 years. And you won't be surprised to learn that during that time, they've seen a lot of changes in the industry.

Trey said, "Change is just part of the business and can have either a positive or a negative impact. For the excavator, Louisiana 811's NextGen has been a game changer. At least it has for us. For years folks have said excavators need to white line all construction sites and I say that is a great practice, but not always possible. For us, white lining a job in Plain Dealing would create a problem if white lining meant we had to drive there to do it. But with NextGen, we now can do it virtually. Highlight where we're going to work, give the map to the locator with the specific location of the worksite and we both win."

Again, speaking on behalf of the excavators, we wish all utilities were members of Louisiana 811 and the reason is obvious. Some utilities require permits to dig within their jurisdiction and of course that is their right. However, because each municipality has their own system, we can't assume getting a permit is going to be issued without delay, so we've learned not to call in a ticket until permits are in hand.

I asked Trey to define the difference between a "good" day and a "bad" day from his perspective. He laughed and said, "A good day is a day when you don't have a lot of complaints. It's a safe and productive day. It's a day when you see your safety culture at work. When everybody on the job cares. We encourage our employees to care about

their safety... to care about the safety of one another... to be proud of what they do and to be proud of their paycheck. We spend a lot of time training our people because they are important to us. Every Monday we meet to discuss what happened the previous week. We celebrate the good and we work to fix the bad. Then we talk about expectations for the upcoming week."

He continued, "For Grady Crawford Construction, the goal is to build great relationships not only with our employees but with the locators and clients as well. The foundation for building these relationships is the willingness to communicate. We want the client to know what we're doing and why or why not we're behind schedule. You can't lie to your client. If they ask you to do something you know you can't do, just say it. Contractors do not have unlimited resources. If we know we can only do so much with what we have, we say that and then try to figure out how best to fill in the gaps. There is a way to get things done but it takes communication to make it happen."

How does that work with the locators? He said, "Exactly the same way. It begins and ends with communication... lots of communication. Contractors get projects that are both client driven and revenue driven. If our crews are going to start a major project, before we touch a blade of grass, we want a preconstruction meeting. At that meeting, I'm going to identify the person that speaks for us on site. We want them to know that we're not trying to ruin their weekends or their home lives. If the locators know us, we've probably already built good relationships. If they don't know us, then we want to start off on the right foot and show good faith. We want to discuss the do's and don'ts for the project. Exchange phone numbers and be ready to adapt on the

fly. We tell our folks to call in work you can get done within the life of the ticket and to use the information given."

When asked what he needed from the locators involved in the project he said, "Oh, I don't know. I guess I'd say make themselves available. Here's what is important to the contractor... locate on time and if you can't do that, then communicate to us when you can. It does me no good to send a crew to an area that is not located. I wouldn't do that if I knew it wasn't located. The most successful projects we've been involved with over the years were because we could work with the locator because he was able to work with us. We all have obstacles to overcome on these kinds of projects, so we must work together to keep from having unnecessary conflict. The truth is it makes sense to learn to work together because we know that it won't be long before we'll be working with these same guys on the next project."

Thanks Trey Crawford for sharing your perspective which was no doubt developed as the result of decades of experience as an excavator. In my experience, projects large and small that went smoothly are the direct result of good communication. And the reverse has always been true too.

Perhaps nobody said it more eloquently than the captain, played by Strother Martin in *Cool Hand Luke*. In identifying the problem with Luke's escape, he said, "What we got here is a failure to communicate."

A failure to communicate dooms every project to frustration, finger pointing and lack of respect. With all that's going on today that is beyond our control, it seems reasonable to me that we'd be willing to do what we can control.

Why can't we just get along? 



# 811 Day Events



Special thanks to Bobby Morgan and Donald Beck from CenterPoint Energy for the opportunity to have our own Jeff Morrison join you in this "cool" event handing out Kona Ice snow cones in celebration of 811 Day!



Brent interview with 104.5 ESPN – Off The Bench with T-Bob Hebert and Jacob Hester.







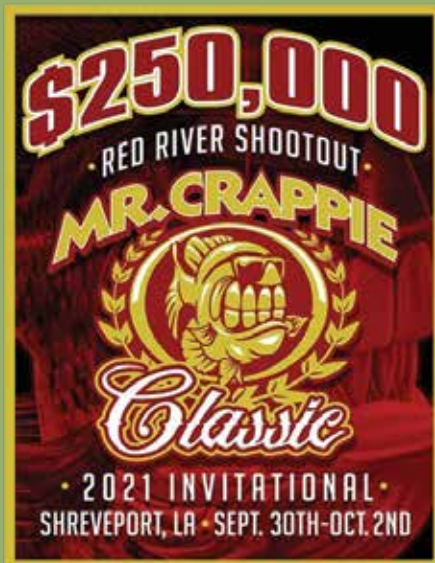
(left to right) James Martarona, Mike Mancil, Charles Nelson and Brent Saltzman

# Two Board Members Retire

Two Louisiana 811 board members retired this year, Charles Nelson, Colonial Pipeline and Mike Mancil, Atmos Energy. We are honored to present Mike and Charles with a recognition plaque for their many years of dedicated service to the Louisiana 811 Board of Directors. Enjoy your retirement, Mike and Charles, and thank you for your countless contributions to our organization and damage prevention efforts.

## Louisiana 811 will be at the 2021 Mr. Crappie Classic

Louisiana 811 is a sponsor of this year's Mr. Crappie Classic and our booth will be front and center at the Shreveport Convention Center. Pro fisherman, Mark Stowe will be there with the 811 John Deere Gator plus we'll give away door prizes. We look forward to seeing you there September 30 - October 2!



# 2021 PIPELINE ASSOCIATION OF LOUISIANA PLEASE ATTEND THIS SAFE DIGGING EVENT

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Bobcat Gas Storage  
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Calumet Cotton Valley Refining, LLC  
Calumet Princeton Refining, LLC  
Calumet Shreveport Refining, LLC  
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CenterPoint Energy  
Central Louisiana Energy Pipeline Company, LLC  
Cheniere Creole Trail Pipeline, L.P.  
Chevron Pipe Line Company  
CITGO Petroleum Corporation  
City Of Gonzales  
Collins Pipeline Company  
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Energy Transfer - Tiger Pipeline, LLC  
EnLink Midstream  
Energy Louisiana, LLC  
Energy New Orleans, LLC  
Enterprise Products  
EnVen Energy Ventures, LLC  
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ExxonMobil Pipeline Company  
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Genesis Energy, LP  
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GT Operating Company, LLC  
Gulf South Pipeline Company, LLC  
Gulf States  
Harvest Midstream  
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Indorama Ventures Olefins, LLC  
Intercontinental Terminals Company  
Kinetica Partners LLC  
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Linde  
Livingston Parish Gas Utility District  
LOCAP, LLC  
Lonestar Geismar  
LOOP, LLC  
Louisiana Energy and Power Authority  
Magellan Midstream Partners, L.P.  
Marathon Pipe Line LLC  
Mardi Gras Midstream LLC  
Matador Production Company  
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Mid-Valley Pipeline Company  
Mission Natural Gas Company, LP  
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Tristate NLA, LLC  
Tristate RLA, LLC  
Trunkline Gas Company  
Valero  
West Texas Gas, Inc.  
Westlake Chemicals  
Weyerhaeuser Company  
Whitecap Pipe Line Company, LLC  
Williams  
Williams - Gas Pipe  
Williams - Midstream  
WSP USA Pipeline  
XTO Energy Inc.

**REGISTRATION**

To register please visit [pal-awareness.com/meeting\\_schedule](https://pal-awareness.com/meeting_schedule). Select the meeting you wish to register for. Once completed you will receive a confirmation email with links and instructions on how to join the virtual meeting. For questions or additional information, contact us at (844) 693-7788 or visit our website at [pal.pipeline-awareness.com](https://pal.pipeline-awareness.com).



Meetings subject to change. Please visit [pal-awareness.com](https://pal-awareness.com) for updates and to learn more about your local pipeline operators.

You may attend any meeting but the meeting in your area will have pipeline operators that are local to the area.

Region	Date	Time
Southern Area	08/03/21	7:30 AM
Southern Area	08/05/21	5:30 PM
Southeastern Area	08/10/21	7:30 AM
Southeastern Area	08/12/21	5:30 PM
Southcentral Area	08/17/21	7:30 AM
Southcentral Area	08/19/21	5:30 PM
Southwestern Area	09/28/21	7:30 AM
Southwestern Area	09/29/21	5:30 PM
Central Area	10/05/21	7:30 AM
Central Area	10/05/21	5:30 PM
Northeastern Area	09/14/21	7:30 AM
Northeastern Area	09/16/21	5:30 PM
Northwestern Area	09/21/21	7:30 AM
Northwestern Area	09/23/21	5:30 PM

Attendees will be entered into a drawing at the conclusion of each meeting for various prizes.

# Membership Contact Information Process Simplified




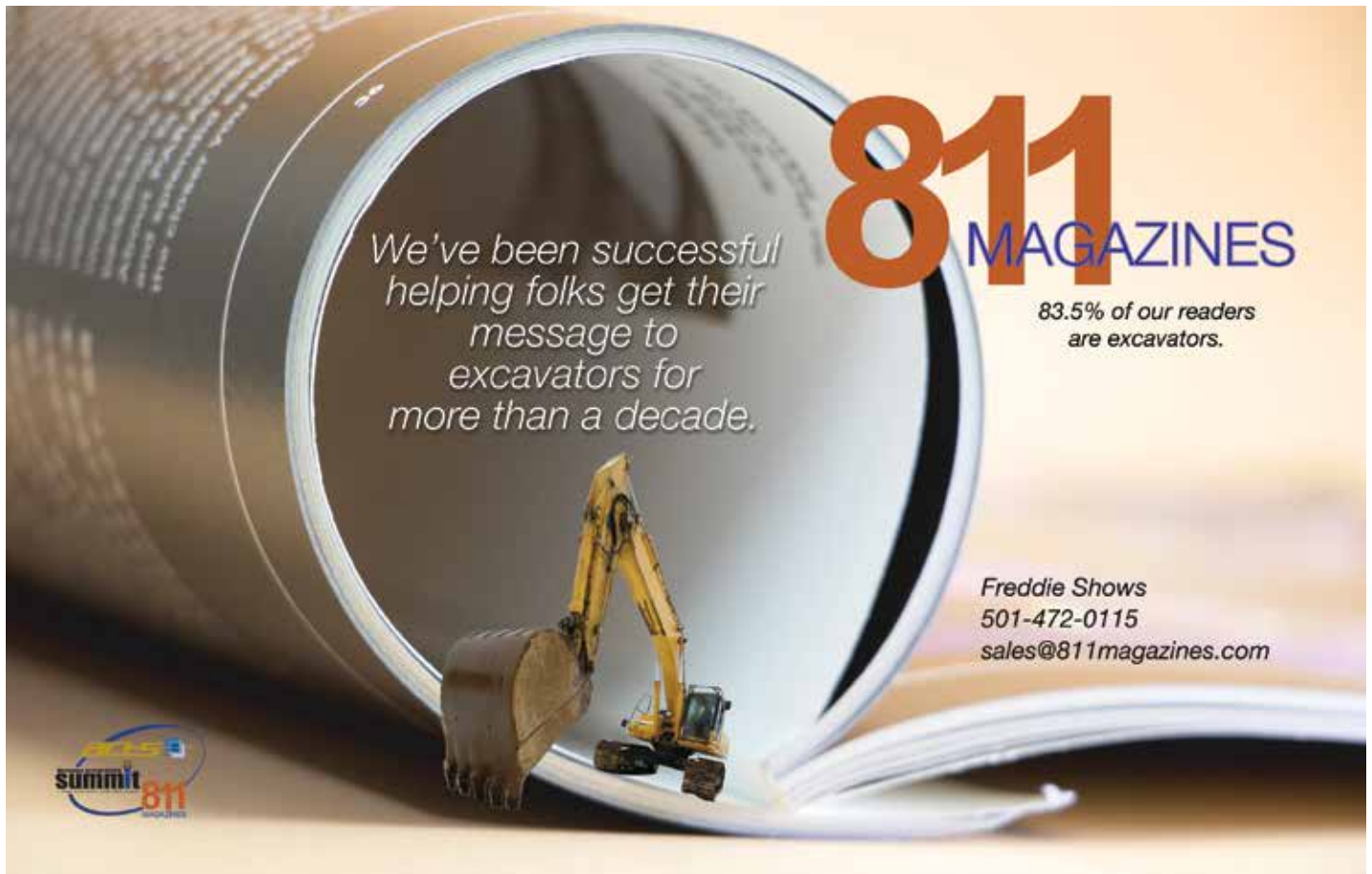
**U**nderground facility operators in Louisiana are required to belong to Louisiana 811, where we maintain the maps and records that allow us to notify them of nearby excavations so that the area can be marked for safety. According to our bylaws, as a condition of membership, all members must review, provide, and update, **ANNUALLY**, all the contact information for the following:

1. **The senior management contact for your company;**
2. **The contact person for notifications;**
3. **The contact person for billing;**
4. **The contact information for the person designated to provide your mapping information and keep it updated.**
5. **The member will provide a 24/7 telephone number for emergency notifications as required by Louisiana Law.**

Our e-Notify system makes it easier and more convenient for our members to keep their contact information accurate and up-to-date. It is a free service that provides the Senior Management Contact Person secure, on-line access to their member information for fast, easy updates. Members who haven't tried it are encouraged to register and give it a test-drive.

If you would like more information on eNotify, please contact Toni Mancuso at 225-275-3700, extension 429 or by e-mail at [enotify@laonecall.com](mailto:enotify@laonecall.com).

If you need assistance with mapping updates, please contact Shana Fleming at 225-275-3700, extension 443 or by e-mail at [sfleming@occinc.com](mailto:sfleming@occinc.com). 




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# TRENCH WARFARE?

By Joe Igel

As I have written in past articles, I began my construction career in the mid-1970s. One of my earliest tasks, as I have also mentioned, was calling in all locate requests. Since then, technology has refined the process, allowed us to narrow the parameters needed for marking, provide more accurate excavation information, screen tickets more accurately, communicate more effectively online, and so on. The process today, in my mind, barely resembles the antiquated way that we did the locate process in the 1970's.

This begs the question, does this technological advance improve the environment we work in? And if our answer is "yes", how do we measure that? Can we simply look at the number of "hits" or should we try to see near misses as well? Should we look at human and financial costs of tragic damages? Can we look at civil suits and the total fines? Does insurance claim data clarify the matter? And with the increased number of states having enforcement provisions, does their data provide insight? It is probably impossible to arrive at a definitive conclusion.

Importantly, are there also limitations on what technology can resolve. Are old, poorly mapped, or unmapped lines an issue for locators, for screeners? If a tracer wire has decayed or broken, can technology provide resolution? If field changes during the installation were


necessary and the as-builts were not submitted, does technology provide an answer? I believe it still comes down to the human element.

When I was in high school and college, I debated competitively. We often used a trite statement to degrade our opponents' statistics, suggesting that they used them much as a drunken person uses a lamppost, for support rather than illumination. Is that the quandary we face today?

As I reflect on this, I do believe that the environment has changed since I started. As my interest in avoiding damages grew, my expected role in the company also grew. When I started, the relationship among the parties (the excavators, the utility owners, the contracting authority, the third-party locators, and so on) was adversarial. I would attend meetings that were intended to bring excavators together with utilities and yet hear "gossipy" kinds of conversations from utility workers making fun of and ridiculing excavators. Every meeting I went to with fellow excavators ran the risk of turning into a gripe session on utilities and their lack of cooperation in the process.

It truly felt that we were engaged in trench warfare, both sides firing upon each other, but neither side discussing the real issues, attempting to see if a peaceful and amicable resolution was possible. And this probably was

motivated by the incentives. Insurance companies, obviously, wanted to keep claims down. Given that a hike in claims or claim amounts would increase insurance costs, so did the other parties. Everyone "bled" their company colors, and that was the issue. Playing the long game did not enter the discussion.

But the attitudes are, from what I witness today, more constructive, more focused, and more of a cooperative nature. Changes in the dig laws that were unthinkable years ago are being made. As violation complaints come before our enforcement board, I feel confident that they are a fraction of where they would have been 45 years ago. While some of the nuances might escape them, the number of people who understand the process has grown, largely due to a concerted educational effort. And I genuinely believe that we are improving the environments for our employees. The key is, that we need to use statistics, current technology, virtually anything we can obtain or employ, not to necessarily "support" our decisions or policies but to "illuminate" paths to continue this improvement, to reach out to the elements that still do not see the entire picture, and to make things even better. 

*Mr. Igel recently retired as vice president of the George J. Igel & Co., Inc. after working there for more than 35 years.*

by John Jacobi

## Gaps in Damage Prevention

**L**ast issue, I talked about using GIS to collect, archive, access and manage data regarding existing underground utilities - things like buried pipelines, buried electrical cable, and buried communications cable.

Why bother? Two big reasons: underground utilities require maintenance and underground utilities **MUST** be dealt with if there is any digging nearby. The need for maintenance should be obvious. How can something be maintained if you do not know where it is? Digging near existing underground utilities can be (is almost always) dangerous because interruption of electrical power or communications can delay emergency response or shut down essential services to schools, hospitals, police departments, etc., not to mention that damaging underground electrical lines and natural gas or hazardous liquid pipelines can be fatal to anyone nearby when the damage occurs.

Natural gas or hazardous liquid pipeline operators are required to participate in one-call systems. Most, if not all, operators of underground electrical systems and underground communications systems (copper or fiber optic) also participate in one-call systems. Dial 811, answer the questions, wait the required time (usually at least 2 days unless its an emergency), obey the marks, and get on with the job. Easy. Right? Not so fast. Every state and even some cities have their own statutes and regulations. It is important that the applicable rules be followed closely. Things like wait time, depth of burial, and tolerance zones are all very important. Nobody wants to have an accident but if one occurs and the "T"s have not been dotted and the "T"s not crossed, things could get far more complicated than they otherwise would be.

What is missing? Lots of things. First, while one-call centers have been

around for years (at least since the 80's), membership did not become mandatory until the late 90's and, in some states, even more recently. Let's just say there is a lot of "stuff" that was buried (pun intended) before call-before-you-dig became the law of the land. The accuracy of the old maps may leave a great deal to be desired.

In my experience, depth of burial is a real concern. State and local building codes have requirements for depth of burial. Would you bet your life that the wire you are worried about is actually 24" below the surface? The federal Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSRs - 49 CFR Parts 190 - 199) burial requirements are in the construction sections. With a few exceptions, PSR pipelines do not have to be buried at all and, even if they are buried, the depth of burial does not have to be maintained.

Different types of instruments are used to locate underground utilities. Some are more accurate than others. All must be maintained and calibrated as well as operated by someone trained for that particular instrument.

Sewers are a particular problem. Many natural gas distribution lines are installed by horizontal directional drilling (HDD). Many sewers are clay tile or PVC (i.e., non-metallic) and difficult to locate. HDD will go right through a clay tile or PVC. This is called a cross-bore and has happened with both replacement lines and new construction. The gas will be connected, and everything will be fine - until the sewer gets clogged and a plumber runs a roto rooter through the sewer and severs the gas line. Natural gas is lighter than air and rises through the sewer line (sewer lines slope downward from the house or business) to the house or business. The gas will accumulate in the building until a spark sets off an explosion. This is still happening - not often, but still too often.

The instruments used to detect underground utilities each have their own unique capabilities. Soil type, moisture content, depth of burial, the presence of other underground utilities (abandoned or otherwise), and the composition of the object of concern (e.g., metallic v. non-metallic) all affect the accuracy of the marks. In urban settings, there are lots of things buried that could affect the accuracy of the marking.


In urban areas, steam may be used to heat buildings. Live steam can be extremely dangerous. I am not aware of any requirements regarding call center membership for steam utilities.

Some water utility companies are not members of 811 and as a result, will not be notified by the call center. Rupturing even a relatively small water main can cause significant service interruption. I remember watching an HDD job in an urban setting. There was a geyser at literally every corner. That had to add a great deal of expense to the job. Fortunately, no gas lines were hit.

A big problem, in my experience, has been providing the call center faulty information about where the new construction is to occur. This may have improved since I retired but "white lining" (look it up) is almost never a bad idea.

I could go on, but you should get the idea by now. One last caveat - occasionally the line locators get overwhelmed with the number of tickets called in and can't meet the regulatory deadline. My advice is to make the call as early as you can and still get the job done before the ticket expires. Use a design ticket when appropriate and use an emergency ticket only if there is an immediate threat to humans, the environment or the integrity of an underground utility.

When it comes time to start digging for whatever reason, there is no substitute for calling 811 and getting a physical locate. Even with a physical locate, it is **IMPORTANT** to make sure that the line of concern is the line that was located.

You cannot be too safe when dealing with buried utilities. 

*John Jacobi retired from PHMSA.  
For questions or comments, email:  
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