

Louisiana



2021 Issue 4

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



This issue is dedicated to

Excavation Advances



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from the desk of

Brent Saltzman



It's really hard to believe that we're almost through another year. Thanks for your encouragement along the way.

Let me remind you of a change that will be important to you in January!

This past legislative session resulted in another amendment to the Louisiana Underground Utilities & Facilities Damage Prevention Law (Dig Law). This amendment, containing two parts, will impact both utility and facility owner/operators as well as excavators and it's important both parties are aware of these changes before the law becomes effective January 2, 2022.

The first portion of this amendment is directed at excavators and addresses white-lining the proposed area of excavation. Many other states already have white-lining requirements in their dig laws. White-lining essentially requires the excavator to physically mark the area of proposed excavation using white paint and/or flags, stakes or similar means under the American Public Works Association (APWA) guidelines prior to submitting notice of intent to excavate. It's vitally important to note that

the markings shall not exceed the actual area of excavation or demolition. Of equal importance to excavators is that, in lieu of physically marking the area of proposed excavation or demolition, electronic drawings identifying the specific location of the area will suffice. In other words, entering your locate requests online will satisfy this requirement in the dig law. This is considered "virtual white-lining" because our member companies are able to view electronically what was drawn by the excavator outlining the area of proposed excavation.

The second portion of this amendment is directed at utility and facility owner/operators and addresses positive response. Like white-lining, many other states already have this provision in their dig laws. Positive response requires the owner/operator of underground facilities to positively respond to the excavator by the mark-by time if they determine that their infrastructure is not in conflict with the area of excavation/demolition outlined on the locate request. Additionally, this provision requires the owner/operator to positively respond to the excavator if their facilities are not fully marked for locating purposes. It's important to note that this portion of the amendment does not specify the method of positive response but it is highly recommended that utility and facility owner/operators use LA811's online Locator Ticket Management System (positive response software). Using our software as a positive response tool will suffice in complying with this requirement.

Both white-lining and positive response are Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Best Practices and are intended to enhance damage prevention efforts. White-lining is extremely beneficial to utility and facility owners/operators and positive response is extremely beneficial to excavators and demolishers. Both parties can expect to see the advantages of this change to our law.

For questions pertaining to the use of our Locator Ticket Management System or anything else related to this issue, feel free to contact us by calling 8-1-1. Our customer service representatives are here to help assist during this transitional period.

I'd be remiss if I didn't congratulate Ed Landgraf and CAMO for receiving the inaugural Groundbreaker Award from CGA. Look for the article and photo in this issue of our magazine.

Plan on being with us for our Damage Prevention Summit from January 31 – February 2, 2022, back at the Crowne Plaza. Hope to see you there.

Enjoy this special holiday season with your families. It has been my privilege to serve you this past year. Let's work together to make 2022 the best and safest year ever!

Brent Saltzman
Executive Director
Louisiana 811

Louisiana 811

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Roger Cox, Publisher

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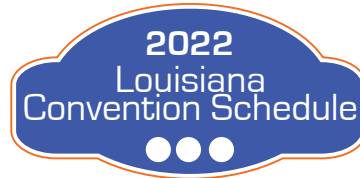
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Louisiana Damage Prevention Summit

January 31 – February 2, 2022

Baton Rouge, LA

www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com

Louisiana Engineering Society Conference

February 2 – 3, 2022

Lafayette, LA

www.les-state.org

Louisiana Nursery Festival

March 18 – 19, 2022

Forest Hill, LA

www.festivalnet.com/43629/Forest-Hill-Louisiana/Festivals/Louisiana-Nursery-Festival

Common Ground Alliance Conference & Expo

April 4 – 8, 2022

Anaheim, CA

www.cgaconference.com

Operations Report

Incoming Calls:

2020 thru Oct – 614,79

2021 thru Oct – 660,086

Outgoing Notifications:

2020 thru Oct – 2,947,677

2021 thru Oct – 3,142,952

Call Ratio (In to Out)

2020 thru Oct – 1: 4.79

2021 thru Oct – 1: 4.76

On-Line Ticket Entry

2020 thru Oct – 79.22%

2021 thru Oct – 81.27%

Home Owner Tickets

2020 thru Oct – 36,594

2021 thru Oct – 39,587

Welcome New Members Since 3rd Quarter

Boardwalk Louisiana Gas Transmission

Centrio Energy South, LLC

Diversified Gas & Oil

Grant Parish Police Jury

Gravity Drainage District One

New Orleans Regional Transit

Pine Prairie Energy Center

Quarter North Energy, LLC

St. Mary Parish Consolidated Gravity Drainage District # 1

STS Petroleum LLC

SWN Production Louisiana

Village of Dodson

Village of McNary

Waterworks District 10, Ward 7

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www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com

Locate Rodeo

Wednesday February 2 at 1:00 pm

DEMCO: 16262 Wax Rd, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739

Go to website to Register!

The way I See it

Louisiana 811

By Cole Vanderlick
Manager - Damage Prevention
Louisiana 811



This year sure has flown by! 2021 has rounded third base and is about to slide into home. Our hearts continue to be with southeast Louisiana and hope they're able to complete their recovery from Hurricane Ida soon. Businesses throughout the state are trying to gain strength and momentum so that 2022 can hopefully be the vibrant year that we all need.

Some highlights from 2021 are that we are trending to have the highest volume of dig tickets ever submitted in a year. Dig tickets submitted by homeowners continue to increase, as well. Our free online excavator training course was created this year and has been utilized by excavators throughout the state. The course is available on our website at any time of your convenience.

Our public awareness and advertising team are working hard to implement innovative efforts to educate the public on 811. We hope that you've seen our static or digital billboards, heard our commercials on the radio, or have seen our commercial on television. You may have also seen our advertising online while browsing the web. Perhaps you could have seen our advertising after searching for a key word, such as dig, fence, pool or tree. One month's statistics from our digital advertising produced over 1,000 visits

to our website and over 440 dig ticket submissions.

We also piloted a Carvertise campaign, wrapping 8 vehicles throughout the state with Louisiana 811 advertising. Our statistics show that over 1.2 million impressions were made in one month from this statewide campaign.

Industry conferences and events are ramping up again, so be sure to check out upcoming events that pertain to you. We are starting 2022 off strong in the sake of safety for all! If you're involved in any events or organizations that would like to partner with 811, please get in touch with us so that we can join you and spread the 811 message to keep our communities and your facilities safe!

We also encourage you to get involved with your local Utility Coordinating Council to discuss local projects, so that everyone is working together safely and efficiently. Feel free to connect with us to find your local council.

Please reach out to us for any help or questions. We want to do everything we can to help protect excavators, the community and our member's facilities.

Let's finish 2021 strong and take on the new year!

For questions or comments, Cole can be reached at cole@laonecall.com. 811



Louisiana Locator of the Year Award



ENTRY DEADLINE – December 28, 2021

Nominations are now being accepted for the Locator of the Year (LOY) Award! Excavators and member utilities, this is your chance to recognize a locator who has done an excellent job for you. Tell us why your nominee is the best of the best! Simply complete a nomination form below and we'll take care of the rest. NOTE: Nominations must come from a member utility company or an excavator that has worked with a locator. Nominating someone from within your company will be allowed and prior winners are not eligible. Only one entry allowed per person and you cannot nominate yourself.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE LOCATOR

Locators must be employed by a Louisiana 811 member or a contract locator employed by a member company and then meet the following criteria:

- Minimum 2 years locating experience in Louisiana
- Must have been employed by a member company during 2021
- Must have completed the following number of locates – Small classification: minimum 500 locates in 2021, Large classification: minimum 3,500 locates in 2021 and Contract Locator: minimum 500 locates in 2021
- Did not have any "At Fault" damages in 2021
- Had Zero Safety Violations in 2021
- Established proactive relationships in damage prevention and extracurricular damage prevention activity should be included on the nomination form
- Eligibility criteria will be verified by locator's supervisor.

• www.locatoroftheyear.com



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.

To schedule your training session, email PublicAwareness@CenterPointEnergy.com.





Sustaining Member Spotlight

New Sustaining Members in 2021



Covington Sales & Service, Inc. is a family-owned business and is currently introducing the fourth generation. We were founded in 1982 in Denham Springs, LA by Gene and Jackie Covington. We have grown to represent over 18 lines in the sewer, road and roadside industry. We believe our customers are great people who deserve great care and friendly reliable service.

Covington Sales & Service prides itself on offering a wide variety of municipal and contractor equipment with a service department to back them up. We offer Asphalt pavers, graders brooms and more. We carry the finest in truck and trailer mounted sewer cleaners, along with sewer inspection camera systems. Mowers are a huge part of our business as well. Boom mowers and remote-control mowers for vegetation management of roads and forest green are a specialty. Sweepers for city streets,

residential areas, roadways, airport runways and parking lots along with debris grapples for storm damage removal round out our equipment lines. Without the proper parts, tools and accessories you are not getting the full advantage of your equipment's ability. Covington Sales carries sewer cleaning nozzles, root cutters, pipe plugs, sewer jetting hose, vacuum tubes and vacuum hoses, just to name a few. To aid in the maintenance of all these lines we have a top-notch, highly trained service department to handle all products repair needs. Our professional parts staff and shipping department offers unparalleled service to our customers.

Our relationship with Louisiana 811 is important as we are part of a great organization that serves to protect our residents, visitors and utility operators. By making the identification of underground utilities available to the individual homeowner or business owner, Louisiana 811 is an important level of protection that is of tremendous value to our community and we are proud to be a Sustaining Member of this great organization.

Covington Sales & Service
7868 Florida Blvd.
Denham Springs, LA 70726
225-664-7427
www.covingtonsales.com



T2 Utility Engineers (T2ue) specializes in the professional investigation and analysis of above and below-ground utilities. We provide comprehensive

Utility Engineering consulting services, including Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE), surveying, and utility coordination to support infrastructure projects of all sizes. Recognized as a leader in managing the risks associated with above-ground and sub-surface utilities, T2ue has provided utility investigation and management expertise since 1993. We are proud to be a trusted partner for public entities and private firms due to our technical leadership, experience, and quality of our work. With offices across the United States and Canada, T2ue can quickly mobilize resources for your project.

LA 811 is a valuable resource for locators and excavators. They ensure that we are working as safely as possible to grow the infrastructure of our state and provide a resource for upcoming changes in legislation and regulations that affect our industry.

Local Contact Information:
Suzanne McCain, PE, LSI
Suzanne.mccain@t2ue.com
225-900-8683

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We value LA811 as it is a representation of our main core value: Safety First. This not only holds true for our employees, but also our customers, and we are here to make sure we are doing our part to keep our entire community safe.

United Rentals
337.316.1947
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As North America's leader in underground utility damage prevention, USIC protects critical infrastructure and communities across 48 states and in Canada. Our more than 11,000 technicians receive extensive and ongoing training and are equipped with the latest, state-of-the-art technologies to deliver the highest quality, safest, and most accurate locating services, and the size and scope of our operations enable us to provide a significant cost advantage for our customers.

An emerging leader in utility services and solutions, USIC includes affiliate companies Blood Hound, RECONN, and On Target, which provide a range of specialized services for the installation, maintenance, protection, and restoration of utility infrastructure and services.

USIC Headquarters Locations
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Zenner vigorously supports groups like Louisiana 811 as they provide a valuable community service that prevents accidents that cause harm or property damage. We are proud to be a contributing sponsor to this organization.

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Building Lafayette Industry Day: Lafayette Consolidated Govt invited us to set up a booth and speak at their meeting where they discussed upcoming construction projects throughout the community.



Louisiana 811 sponsored



Thanks to Pipeline Technology for displaying our banner in front of their office, and we encourage members to reach out to us if they have high traffic areas that would be a good fit for displaying a banner.



Louisiana Gas Association: Pipeline sponsored, exhibited and

with
ana **811**[®]



the Crappie Expo national fishing tournament.



Presentation at Louisiana Tech Trenchless Technology Auger and Bore School



Presented and exhibited at the Louisiana Rural Water Association mini conference.



Safety Conference - LA811 and presented.



One Call Concepts: Users Group meeting; Interacted with other 811 Call Centers throughout the country to learn what is and is not working with states throughout the country..

Keep up with the latest from

Louisiana 811





Louisiana 811 Scholarship

Our Mission: The Mission of Louisiana 811 is to support the protection of our members' facilities, the public, and the environment by providing excellent damage prevention services in a cost-effective manner.

Our Vision: The Vision of Louisiana 811 is to be a prominent leader in damage prevention through innovation, education and technology while providing excellent customer service.

LA811 Scholarship Eligibility

- Applicants must be Louisiana residents and attend an accredited Louisiana high school, public or private.
- Applicants must be seniors at their respective high schools.
- Applicants must be planning to attend either a community college, an accredited trade school, or a four year, accredited, college or university by the following fall after graduation.

GUIDELINES

The application requires the student to complete the on-line application form that can be found at: www.scholarship.louisiana811.com. The student is to be the sole contributor to and creator of the submission document. Please note that all submissions will be the property of Louisiana 811 and used at our discretion.

The first portion of the on-line application requires the student to provide their contact information as well as the high school they are currently attending and the school they are planning on attending next fall.

The second portion of the application provides the opportunity to learn more about the student and their involvement in their high school and community. The student should concentrate on hobbies, favorite academic subject, and any information supporting that the student works with others as a team, demonstrates leadership skills, and/or has contributed to improving his/her community.

The third portion of the application is for the Essay (300 words or less). Describe how you would deliver and how you would stress the importance of the 811 Message, "Call Before You Dig", to your peer group and/or family members.

The fourth and final portion of the application is for the Transcript. In addition to the application submission, students must provide a copy of their high school transcript(s) that can be uploaded to the site.

All applications must be received by 5pm Friday, March 18, 2022. Applications received after the due date or not submitted in their entirety will not be considered. Winners will be announced by a combination of phone, email, and written letter.

Submit your application at scholarship.louisiana811.com. If there are any questions or you need more information, please email: Cole Vanderlick, Manager-Damage Prevention. cole@laonecall.com

Avoiding Workers Comp Pitfalls

By Virginia Reames
The Policy Center

Whenever one of the major utilities opens a job, countless contractors apply. One of the bigger requirements is insurance – including Workers Comp.

Time and again a contractor will say “I don’t have to have it. I don’t have enough employees”. Well, they find out quick enough that if they want a shot at that contract, they DO have to have it! That law doesn’t say “You are exempt from liability because you don’t have enough employees”. It simply says you won’t violate the law if you don’t have it. You are still liable if an employee gets hurt working for you – whether you have 1 or 101 employees. That contract wants to see Workers Comp regardless of if it’s you and only you!

Why??

Because the General Contractor will have to pay for your Workers Comp if

place during the period you worked for him! Simple economics – never mind the Big Deal if someone gets hurt and sues. The GC will have to pay to cover every sub even if no one gets hurt.



Let’s say you get that Workers Comp; you get the contract and you hire a few workers. Then you have to sub out a section of the job to someone else. Did you get a certificate from the sub saying he has Workers Comp coverage in place? Then you are going to have to pay for his Workers Comp when your policy is audited at the end of the policy year!

you can’t provide him with a certificate showing you have Workers Comp in

Each year, every Workers Comp carrier in the country conducts an audit.

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dig this.**

Pipeline safety starts from the ground up.

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If you fail to comply with the request for audit information, your Workers Comp will get cancelled and you can't get it anywhere else until you have completed that year's audit.

The National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) keeps up with all these details, and every company doing business in this country checks with NCCI before issuing a new Workers Comp policy. There simply is no way around compliance – and you must have Workers Comp insurance if you want a shot at the bigger jobs!


Let's say you get all your insurance and bonding, put in a bid, and you get the contract. It starts out being just in

your home state, and things are fine for a year or so. You are doing a great job, and the job now spreads over into neighboring states. Is this a problem? It CAN be!

ALL insurance companies are not licensed to do business in every state. It's a filing process done by the company and the Insurance Commission in each state – and there are requirements, regulations and expenses involved. So, every company is not everywhere. Double check with your agent and make sure all your companies are filed in whichever states you might be going into. But if you didn't check before, and might be going into a neighboring state, remember this: you can take employees from your home state with you and they would be covered – BUT you cannot hire a resident of another state if your Workers Comp carrier is not licensed in that state. There won't be any coverage if one of them gets hurt. If an employee you brought with you from your home state gets hurt – you are covered. Not the case if you hired someone from the neighboring state and HE got hurt.

There are even states where ONLY certain Workers Comp companies are able to be filed. You can have a company that is as big as the universe, is filed and legal to do business everywhere else on the planet – but, oops! not in these states. So sorry --

It's a fairly good idea to keep in regular touch with your insurance agent when/if your plans expand. That agent should know which companies are good where – and remember, rates vary between companies. If your agent didn't put you with one of the companies that can do business in a neighboring state, it could well be that you are saving some money – which was the driver on that decision as to where to put you originally. That agent is really trying to get you the best deal – that's how he keeps you as a customer.

But when you operate in multiple states, it's not about the rates – it's about the coverage. More than anything, your agents want to be sure you're covered...because you never know. 



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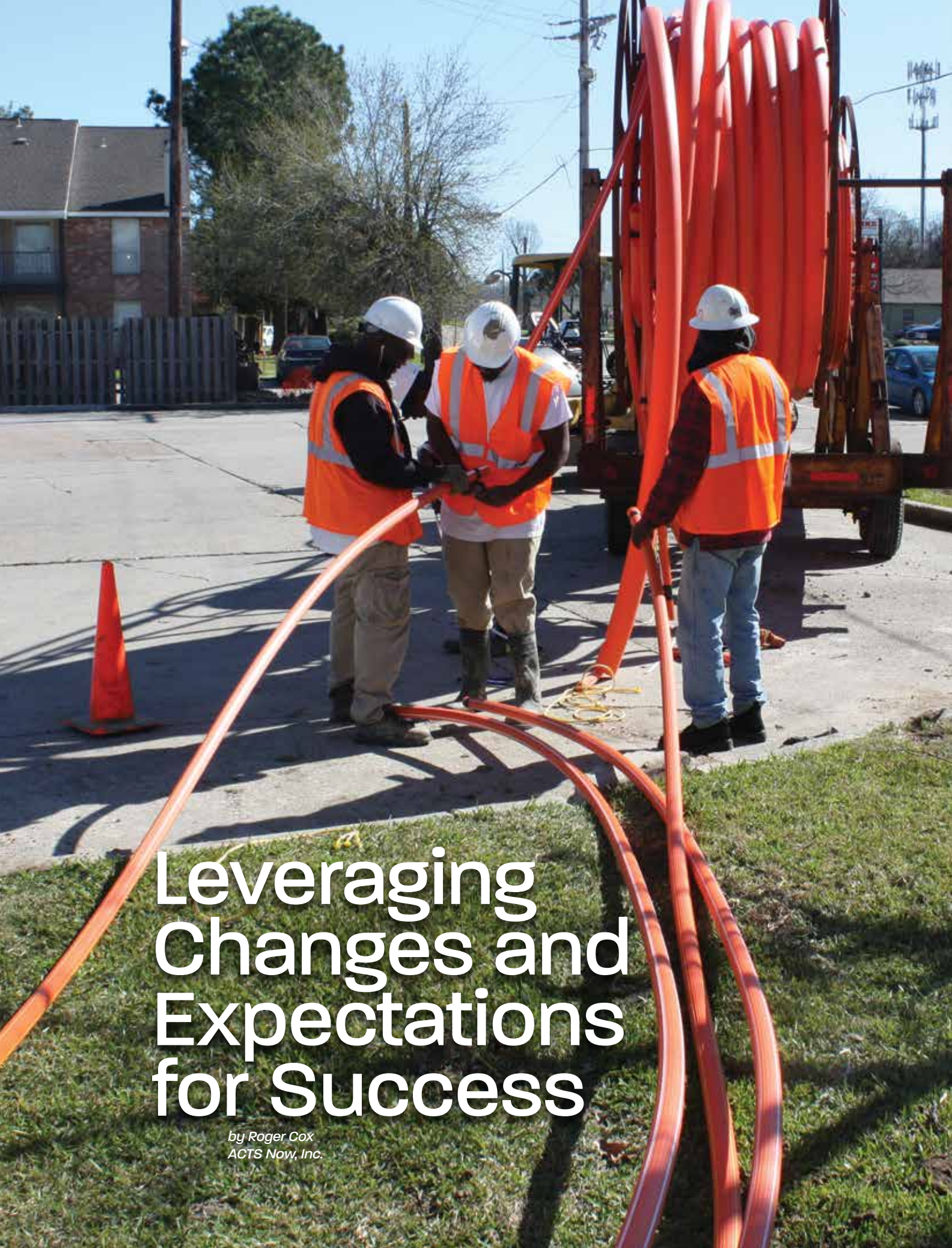




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Leveraging Changes and Expectations for Success

*by Roger Cox
ACTS Now, Inc.*

Excauation advances are often thought of in terms of equipment and perhaps technology. Certainly, there is a lot to celebrate with those kinds of advances. However, long-term and meaningful advances in ensuring zero damages and maximum profitability may have more to do with perspective as it does with the latest piece of equipment.

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 working on major projects from Texas to Georgia in the south. 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, a game changer is working in states that have implemented virtual white lining. 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 three hours away would create a problem if white lining meant we had to drive there to do it. But with virtual white lining, we now can do it. Highlight where we're going to work, give the map to the locator with the specific location of the worksite and we both win. It is not yet available everywhere we work, but it will be soon."

Again, speaking on behalf of the excavators, we wish all utilities were members of the 811 Centers across the country 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 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 was 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? 



Always call
811 before
you dig.

And if you suspect a gas leak, call
1-800-ENTERGY (368-3749) or 911.

At Entergy, safety is our
number one priority.
Make it yours!



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WE POWER LIFESM



(left to right) Ed Landgraf, Thelma Coleman and Brent Saltzman

From CGA:


Recognizing Pioneers in Damage Prevention

The CGA established an awards program to celebrate the successes of our members as well as those in the larger damage prevention community. Since that time, the CGA has recognized many individuals who have demonstrated great dedication to damage prevention.

At the 2021 conference, CGA announced the first-ever Groundbreaker Award recipients. These Groundbreakers are individuals and organizations that have proven themselves as pioneers in damage prevention and are contributing groundbreaking ideas and achievements for the betterment of the industry.

Congratulations to Ed Landgraf & Coastal and Marine Operators (CAMO) being chosen as a Groundbreaker for 2021!

Coastal And Marine Operators (CAMO) - CAMO has introduced the marine industry to a new level of pipeline awareness and safety. The organization partnered with major U.S. ports and marine pipeline stakeholders to develop multiple marine pipeline initiatives that seek to mitigate underwater pipeline damages. These initiatives, including the Port of South Louisiana Pipeline Safety Initiative and the Port Fourchon Pipeline Safety Program, have helped to prevent catastrophic loss of life and major economic and environmental impacts in some of the largest marine communities in the country.

On behalf of the Louisiana 811 Magazine team, we congratulate Ed on this achievement as well. 

It Starts at the

TOP?

By Joe Igel



My wife and I like to travel and while we have taken a sabbatical from it during COVID for obvious reasons, we have still made a few family-related trips exercising as sound a judgment and as many precautions as we could.

On a recent trip, we were eating at a nice restaurant on a socially distanced outside patio. At the table across from us was a larger party, with several children in it. One of the children, around 7 years of age, grabbed ice cubes from his drink, put them in his mouth and then proceeded to spit them into the air. After each spit, he looked back at the table for reaction. Apparently receiving none, he repeated the process. He stopped for a moment, but when he resumed, I decided to get up and intervene.


Besides the obvious COVID concerns, the inappropriateness in a nice restaurant should be apparent. From several reactions at other tables, it was to other patrons on the patio as well. Being as nice as I could, I went to the table to try to stop the antics, addressing nicely any “adult in charge” to stop him from repeating the act. Rather than get into an argument over COVID, I chose the appropriateness of his actions in a restaurant as my point of emphasis. While I could tell my intervention was unappreciated by the table, the activity did stop, and we could finish our dinner without further event.

You might ask how this story relates to safety, risk management and the impact of recent technology on the industry. It does in the most basic of ways. It does because safety, management and the introduction of technology is not a replacement for sound judgment. A seven-year-old may not fully understand

what is wrong with spitting ice cubes into the air in a restaurant but a parent certainly should, and it is the parent’s duty to ensure that the child does as well or for the parent to take a more active role in supervision. Since a parent cannot be everywhere at once, much as a safety director can not be in all places, instilling the values and understanding is the wisest approach.

This is not meant to compare employees to children but to explore the supervisory roles in safety and the use of technology. In past articles, I have stressed the need to empower employees with the values of the company with respect to safety, so they understand the correct path to follow. However, as supervisors, as managers, if we do not embrace those values, if we do not follow our own rules, we send a mixed message and our ability to provide a safe working environment will most certainly go awry.

No technology, no matter how state-of-the-art, can make up for this. While it may eliminate some problematic decisions, it will also introduce new ones. No safety talk can correct the louder message sent by behavior. Sometimes, after many years in the industry, safety professionals get tired and frustrated, allowing behaviors (missing eye protection, other PPE seems common) they know are wrong to go on. Whether it is some version of “boys will be boys” or a feeling that no one will listen to them, really makes no difference. The result is the same.

A refocus on core values and getting endorsement up and down the ranks must be the priority for actual safety. 

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

the **JACOBI** P E R S P E C T I V E

by John Jacobi

Excavation Advances

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA, <https://commongroundalliance.com>) defines Excavate or Excavation: as “Any operation using non-mechanized or mechanized equipment, demolition, or explosives in the movement of earth, rock, or other material below existing grade.” As far as I am concerned the CGA definition is as good as any. That said, in its simplest terms, excavation is simply digging a hole in the ground.

Have you ever dug a hole in the ground? I have. What is important when you are digging a hole? Lots of things like where are you going to dig the hole? What is near the hole? How deep does the hole need to be? How big does the hole have to be? What can be done with the excavated material? What is the hole going to be used for? What is the soil like (i.e., is it sandy, soft, wet, rocky, full of gravel, full of roots - you get the idea)? What is the purpose of the hole (i.e., plant a tree, put in a fence post, a basement, a foundation, a lake or pond, or just recontouring for appearance)? When does the job have to be done? Is there a budget (there is ALWAYS a budget!!)?

The list of considerations is endless. Which consideration is most important? I submit that the single most important consideration is safety: Can the hole be dug without unacceptable risk to humans or the environment? Good question. What is unacceptable risk? Or, to put it another way, how safe is safe? That question is well beyond the space I have for this discussion.

The basic idea is to plan the work and then work the plan - but work the plan with your head up. Things change. If the plans are good and are followed, the project will probably go well. If a good plan is not followed, it is worthless. In my last couple of articles, I talked about the importance of GIS and Mapping and data management. If the plan is based on bad data, it is probably not a good plan. Surprises pop up. Managers **MUST** earn the confidence of the boots on the ground. Poor decision making at the top and ignoring the needs and concerns of the boots on the ground are recipes for disaster.

There is no doubt that the equipment available to identify potential underground hazards today is vastly superior to what used to be available. But today's equipment must be properly maintained and operated by skilled technicians. Just pushing buttons and recording readings may not be enough. The same can be said for modern excavating techniques. GPS controlled dozers, backhoes, vertical drilling rigs, tunneling & boring equipment, and horizontal directional drilling equipment can do wonderful things - but they are only machines. Somebody that knows what they are doing must maintain and calibrate the equipment and the “boots on the ground” operating the equipment must be able to recognize abnormal situations and shut things down before somebody gets hurt. Can you say, “Deepwater Horizon”?

Other “advances” in excavation are the types and quality of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is available today

and volumes of regulations that must be followed in the excavation industry. In my opinion, PPE can make some jobs more difficult and uncomfortable. So what?! The inconvenience of modern PPE is minor compared to the reduction in the number of injuries and the reduction in the severity of the injuries that do occur make the minor inconvenience well worth the investment. Furthermore, I would suggest that each time PPE “reminds” a worker that he or she is wearing PPE should be a reminder that **SAFETY IS IMPORTANT!!**

As for the regulations, they are typically the minimum required. Everyone involved should be aware of, if not familiar with, the applicable regulations. Regulations, however, are a poor substitute for real world knowledge about what is going on and the courage to stop a job before someone gets hurt.

A good old fashioned shovel and the wisdom to know when and how to use it are often two of the best tools there are for safe excavation.

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 underground utility of concern was actually located.

You cannot be too safe when excavating. 811

*John Jacobi retired from PHMSA.
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