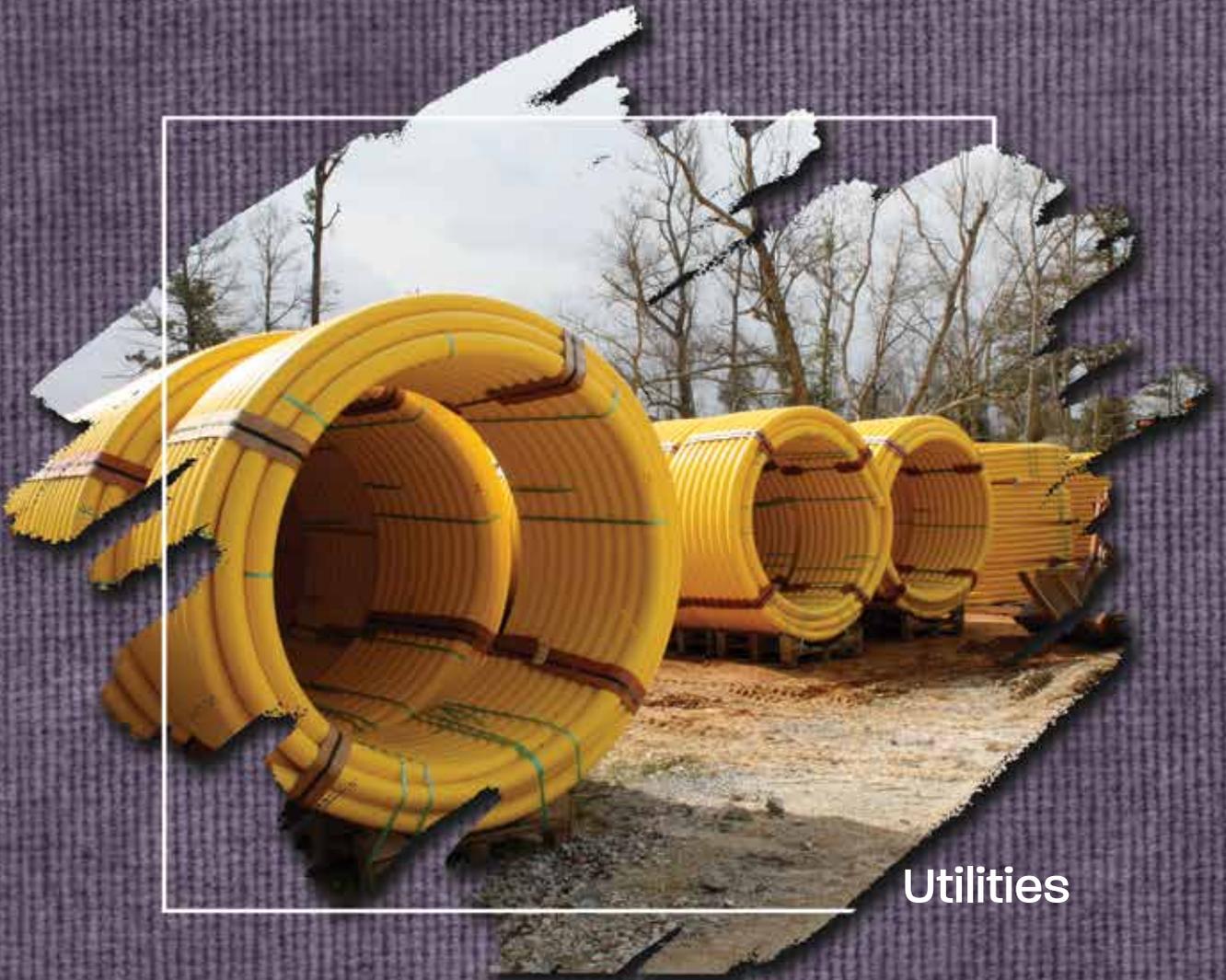


Louisiana



2023 Issue 4



Utilities



DON'T ignore me.

What? You don't think that you should pay attention to a little yellow flag? Well, I'm the best thing to keep your crew safe. Call 811 before digging, and Atmos Energy will plant me and my pals wherever natural gas lines are buried. Trust me, you'd rather have us get your attention than a natural gas line.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



from the desk of

Brent Saltzman



I mentioned to our Board of Directors at our last board meeting that we don't celebrate our successes enough. No, it's not boasting about Louisiana 811 but merely pointing out that we have a lot to be proud of with our organization.

We attend several regional meetings and national conferences throughout the year to gather information from our peers on how we can enhance our program to make it better for all our stakeholders. We also share our successes at these meetings/conferences and the exchange of information is priceless.

I thought I would use this column to share some of the successes we've achieved thus far in 2023. Listed in no particular order, they are as follows:

- LA811's price per ticket for our members remains one of the lowest nationwide. We have a lean organization that manages our investments wisely while providing all the services that are expected of us. We continually monitor our expenses closely and look for innovative ways to be efficient with our dollars.
- We have outstanding software for excavators to use that is superior to software used by many other centers thanks to our long-term partners at One Call Concepts. I have personally heard from excavators who work in multiple states and from other facility notification centers (811 centers) that our software is precise, easy to use and has many features not offered elsewhere.
- Related to the above mentioned point, we have the highest online ticket entry percentage than any other southeast state (89.88%). Statistics indicate that the higher the online ticket percentage, the lower the damage rate because online tickets tend to have more precise areas of excavation.
- We have more LA811 members than any other southeast state (1,091) even though we don't have mandatory membership like many other states! I think this is a testament to the value we provide for our members.
- Our average speed of answer (time it takes to speak to a customer service representative/operator) remains very low as is the abandonment rate (number of callers who hang up because of long wait times). One Call Concepts does a great job of monitoring these metrics for us and keeping well-trained personnel.

Although we do a lot of things very well, we will never stop pursuing perfection. We welcome constructive criticism and positive feedback and are always willing to listen to those who use our services.

In closing, I hope to see you at our upcoming Damage Prevention Summit that will be held January 23-25 at LAuberge in Baton Rouge. Find out more about this informative, educational and fun event at www.LA811.com.

Until next time, keep safe and God bless!

Brent Saltzman
Executive Director
Louisiana 811

Louisiana 811



5 Traveling with Louisiana 811

6 The Way I See It

8 Tackling Locating Challenges with Innovative Technology

11 Utility Owner/Operator Unique Role in Damage Prevention

1 from the desk of Brent Saltzman

4 New Members/Operations Report

7 Louisiana Damage Prevention Summit

10 CenterPoint Energy's Multi-Channel Strategy for 811 Day

12 Sustaining Member Spotlight

14 Enforcement Updates

17 The State of Broadband With ConnectLA

18 Membership Contact Information Process Simplified

19 Diggers Night Out

20 I Was Born To Do This

2023 Issue 4

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Roger Cox, Publisher

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Contact Louisiana 811 for specifics in their dig law.

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

Email: publisher@811magazines.com

Louisiana 811

or 2215 West Boardwalk Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70816

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Call before you dig.

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Did you make that call?



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Call before you dig.

Boardwalk Pipelines
is committed to
operating pipeline
assets in a safe,
reliable and
compliant manner
and providing the
highest level of
customer service.



New Members 2023

Aldine Oil & Gas, LP
Bison Water & Wastewater LLC
Bull Operating LLC
Conexon Connect LLC
East Carroll Water System South
EMC Water System, Inc.
Extex Operating Co.
FP Balboa LA, LLC dba Formentera Operations LLC
GOM Shelf LLC
Guardian Decommissioning, Inc.
Kinder Morgan Ranger, LLC
LGOT, LP
LOBO
Mallard Operating LLC
Rosefield Operating Company, LLC
Town of Campiti
Town of Mangham
Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
Vexus Fiber LLC

Sustaining Memberships

Armand Construction, Inc.
Access Construction Management Services Inc.

Operations Report

Operational Numbers through October
Updated Operational Numbers for LA811:

Incoming Locate Requests:

2022 YTD thru Oct – 742,588

2023 YTD thru Oct – 686,386

Outgoing Notifications:

2022 YTD thru Oct – 3,600,170

2023 YTD thru Oct – 3,320,750

Call Ratio (Incoming notifications to Outgoing Members)

2022 YTD thru Oct – 1:4.84

2023 YTD thru Oct – 1:4.84

On-Line Ticket Entry

2022 YTD thru Oct– 88.36%

2023 YTD thru Oct– 89.88%

Traveling with *Louisiana* 811®



CLECO and Preferred Electric breakfast safety presentation in Mandeville.



Steven Giambrone presenting at the LGA Pipeline Safety Conference.



LGA Pipeline Safety Conference 2023.



LRWA mini conference, Jeff Morrison networking with water operators.



Cole Vanderlick at the LGA Annual Operations Conference.



Pipeline Association of Louisiana (PAL) meeting.

The way I See it

Louisiana 811

By Cole Vanderlick
Manager - Damage Prevention
Louisiana 811



Happy Holidays to our friends out there! It feels great getting together with you throughout the industry lately at conferences. Numerous members and contractors have recently requested our involvement and presentation in their safety meetings. We could not be happier about that and urge you to reach out to us to get together! It's a good time to get updated on Louisiana's dig laws or 811 training during a wet and cold winter.

We're counting on seeing you at the upcoming Damage Prevention Summit at LAuberge in Baton Rouge in January! It's an amazing time and networking event, but more importantly a very educational experience. Check it out at Louisiana.DamagePreventionSummit.com, and I think you'll be happy you attended! At this conference, we will award the 2023 Locator of the Year Award. Nominate a difference maker who has made a work site safer at LocatorOfTheYear.com. We will conclude the Summit with the 2024 Locate Rodeo. For a \$25 entry, you can compete for the \$1,000 grand prize! There will also be cash prizes awarded to Division winners and 2nd Overall winner. Come put your locating skills to the test and let's celebrate the Locators with a fun time!

Sponsorship opportunities are also available. More details can be found on the Damage Prevention Summit website.

The last industry event I want to mention that we are lucky to host in Louisiana is Excavation Safety Alliance's Global Excavation Safety Conference. Usually, this nationwide industry conference is on the East or West Coast, but this is the first time it is coming to Louisiana. Come meet industry peers from across America in your backyard in New Orleans and show them that Louisiana zest. Let the good times roll and make them want to come back to our great state! We are also conducting a Louisiana 811 annual membership meeting on the last day of this conference. Network both locally and nationally at GlobalExcavationSafetyConference.com and help us host an impactful damage prevention conference.

We are frequently helping various industry stakeholders coordinate through projects or issues to prevent damages and create a safer environment for our community. Whenever you need help communicating with someone on an underground project, we want you to think of 811. We have your back and are here for the safety of all! 811



LOUISIANA
damage prevention
Summit
A CGA REGIONAL PARTNER EVENT



www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com

When: Tuesday January 23 – Thursday
January 25, 2024

Where: L'Auberge Casino & Hotel Baton Rouge

Theme: Working together to create Louisiana
solutions for Louisiana issues.

Come network within the utility industry while
learning about key topics that affect us every
day in this jam-packed conference agenda!

A CGA Regional Partner Event



Golf Outing
Tuesday January 23
10:30am – 2:00pm
TopGolf Baton Rouge

Start the New Year with CenterPoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy training is focused on making sure your leadership and field personnel understand the 811 state laws, safe digging best practices, and other tips to help your projects be completed damage free without the delays and expenses of cutting a natural gas line. Most importantly, it is critical we cover how to stay safe in the event of a cut natural gas line.

Our training also covers the steps to prevent natural gas ignition, explosion, and inherent risks should blowing gas from a damaged pipeline occur in your community.



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



Tackling Locating Challenges with Innovative Technology

In Louisiana and all throughout the United States, locating comes with a unique set of challenges, including unpredictable volume which can outpace available resources; difficulties related to obtaining, training, and retaining skilled locators; a short window for required turnaround on locates; and large or complicated work areas. All of these challenges can lead to even bigger problems like locating delays. To address this, Louisiana 811 provides free, state-of-the-art software designed specifically for member utilities and locators. This software is Locator Ticket Management, a ticket management portal that can be used to easily manage locate requests online and provide electronic positive response status back to excavators. It addresses the following solutions to today's locating challenges.

Streamlined and customizable ticket management

Locator Ticket Management offers a streamlined portal, allowing member utilities and locators to use as few or as many features as they'd like. They can also customize their view of the software. Just a few of the innovative features included in Locator Ticket Management include: assigning locators to different tickets manually or automatically; sorting your list of tickets by categories such as ticket type, location, status, or assigned locator; and running specialized reports on your district or locator activity.

Electronic positive response

Providing electronic positive response is another important piece in addressing today's biggest locating challenges. Positive response allows member utilities and locators to communicate the status of a locate request directly

with the excavator. This full-circle communication increases clarity and reduces the chance of a damage occurring by providing excavators with the additional information they need to work safely at the job site.

Mobile access to ticket management

In addition to being available online, Locator Ticket Management can be accessed through the Louisiana 811 mobile app, making it easier than ever for member utilities and locators to

notes or set up text alerts for emergency notifications. This free tool is intended to help address any locating challenges you're facing in whatever way works best for you – if you have any questions about how Locator Ticket Management can best help you, please contact Shana Fleming, database administrator, directly at sfleming@occinc.com.

Getting set up to use Locator Ticket Management is free and easy. If this is something that your company would be interested in utilizing, please contact Shana Fleming, database administrator, directly at sfleming@occinc.com or by phone at 225-275-3700 (ext. 443, option 9).

LOCATOR TICKET MANAGEMENT

About the Louisiana 811 Operations Team

The operations team is responsible for all tickets filed through Louisiana 811. Please call 8-1-1 or 1-800-272-3020 to be connected with a trained operator for questions regarding:

- Filing a locate request for underground or submerged utilities to be located, submitting a second request, or updating/canceling a ticket
- Filing an emergency ticket – please note that Louisiana 811 is available for emergency locate requests 24/7 online or by calling 8-1-1 or 1-800-272-3020
- Finding an existing ticket – this can also be done online using our Ticket Search feature located under the “Locate Request” navigation tab on Louisiana811.com
- Any ISITE or NEXTGEN issues, or help with user ID (passwords, usernames)

manage and monitor locate requests or provide electronic positive response while out in the field. The Louisiana 811 app is available for free on both the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.

New features for your current process

You might be thinking, “I’m interested in trying it, but not ready to make the full switch.” No problem – Locator Ticket Management can be run jointly with any ticket receiving process you may be currently using. You can continue to receive your tickets by email or fax and utilize Locator Ticket Management to view interactive maps, provide electronic positive response, and sort or organize your locate requests. You can also take advantage of useful features, like the ability to add internal and/or public attachments and

Charlene Ellison, General Manager



As general manager of the Louisiana 811 notification center, Charlene oversees the center's day-to-day activities and provides support to Louisiana 811 as a One Call Concepts (OCC) employee. She brings 20 years of experience to the role.

Contact Charlene at 225-275-3700 (ext. 475) or charlene@laonecall.com.

Shana Fleming Database Administrator



Known lovingly around the office as the "Louisiana 811 Map Guru," Shana is the database administrator for Louisiana 811. In this role, she supports the technology behind Louisiana 811 – including Locator Ticket Management® and IMAP – by meticulously maintaining and updating maps, assisting LA811 members, and training employees. Shana also brings over 20 years of experience to her role.

Contact Shana at 225-275-3700 (ext. 443, option 9) or sfleming@occinc.com. 



Call 811 before you dig



Your safety is our number one priority.

From installing a new pool to simply planting a tree, digging without knowing what's beneath the surface can be extremely dangerous. You could also disrupt utility services to your neighborhood, leading to expensive repairs and fines.

When you call 811, all utilities, including Entergy, will respond within two business days to locate and mark the underground utility lines. (The two business days start the morning after you call).

And if you suspect a gas leak, leave the area immediately and call **1-800-ENERGY** (368-3749) or **911**. Indications of a gas leak include the distinctive smell of natural gas, a whistling or hissing sound near a gas appliance, or dead vegetation and bubbles near a gas line.

We power life.™

A message from Entergy New Orleans, LLC and Entergy Louisiana, LLC
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CenterPoint Energy's Multi-Channel Strategy for 811 Day

By Jamie Billings
Public Safety Specialist

CenterPoint Energy connects to the communities we serve, utilizing multiple educational and outreach opportunities to make 811 Day 2023 a memorable experience for all.

Kona Ice Trucks

CenterPoint partnered with Kona Ice trucks in select cities across five states in its service footprint to deliver shaved ice treats to local community members. Trucks were decorated with 811 messaging and escorted by a CenterPoint employee for four hours. Stops included Dig World in Katy, Texas, hardware stores, a blood drive and block party in Mississippi, areas with heavy construction activities, and densely populated residential neighborhoods. Before digging into their treats, patrons were reminded to contact 811 before starting any outdoor digging projects. CNP sent out a media release asking local networks to stop by on the truck routes which gave an opportunity to share the safe digging message on the local news that day.

811 Cookie Deliveries

CenterPoint delivered 811-themed cookies to community leaders, media, emergency responders, excavation companies, and others partners in Damage Prevention. The "Cookie Drop" created a blitz of social media posts from these influential stakeholders promoting natural gas safety with their communities. "A message from the local fire department, mayor or Houston Emergency Management is extremely valuable" said Shane Alexander, Director of Damage Prevention, Public Awareness and Meter Reading. "The public has a connection with those social media pages, and we appreciate each one of the partners who helped share the message for 811 Day".

The Houston market had a collaborated effort with activation at three locations – the Sugarland Space Cowboys game on 8/4, Dig World in Katy on 8/11, and at the Annual Sandcastle Competition in Galveston. At each of these events, there were many volunteers on site to engage with the community and distribute 811 Call Before You Dig information and swag. 811 Run Minnesota CenterPoint Energy, along with Gopher State One Call and other companies, hosted the annual 811 5K

Run and Walk at Lake Bde Maka Ska in Minneapolis on Saturday August 13 th . Over 180 runners left the starting line at 8:11AM for to raise money for Operation Warm, an organization that provides new, warm winter coats for Minnesota children in need. Sponsors hosted booths at the vendor fair, allowing participants and attendees to explore and gather information on safe digging in their area.

Radio, Social Media & TV

To publicize CenterPoint's efforts to increase awareness of calling 811 on National 811 Day, Corporate Communications executed a media campaign featuring social media posts, press kit items such as a news advisory and news release, employee media trainings and employee interviews. Valued at approximately \$8,215, CenterPoint's 811 Day interviews garnered more than 42,000 views across 12 positive broadcast segments, articles, and radio mentions while social media posts across Facebook,

Twitter and Nextdoor gained nearly 2.1 million views. These results from corporate communications, combined with the activations listed above, made August 11 th , 2023, our most successful day ever to promote safe digging. 



Utility Owner/Operator Unique Role in Damage Prevention

By Roger Cox

*Can this really happen? Sure, it can.
Will it ever happen? Sure, it will.
When? When the first company steps
out and leads the way.*

Look! Here's the long and short of it. We hire contractors to do what we can't do in-house. We tell them what we want, and they agree to do it for us for a specific price. We sign a contract to get the job done within a certain timeline. We don't really care how they do it. We just want it done. How they do it is up to them... it is not our job to tell them how to do their job.

"Really?" thinks I to myself.

Perhaps you think that this is a one-in-a-million mindset. What would you say if I told you that I've heard that sentiment many times across the entire country? When you sit in meetings discussing damage prevention or enforcement for violating a state's dig law, whether you are talking to impacted stakeholders or state or federal regulators, the conversation is rather predictable. It's about calling 811 before you dig, or it's dig carefully or maybe we'll talk about goals. At some

point the question is raised, "What are we going to do about these unnecessary damages?" Someone says, "We need to hire more locators." Others point out, "We need to restrict the number of excavators, so we'll create a permitting system that protects our city, that will solve the problem."

It may solve your problem, but it doesn't solve the problem. And actually, it can create more problems than it solves, and that can be proven fairly easy but that's for another article.

Back to the first paragraph for a moment... what if it was the utility owner's job to tell their contractor how to do their job? Oh, I don't mean how to do their job technically. The contractor would not have been in the running for the job if they couldn't do the job technically. But what about the expectations of the utility on the contractor's (whether excavator or locator) impact on the utility's brand?

I'm talking about the brand of that utility's customer service, their respect for fellow utility owners or their respect for the county's and/or city's infrastructure.

When damage prevention is defined by more than "Did you make the call", "Was it located accurately and on time" and "Did you expose the line", real progress can be made and measured. If this is really all about changing behaviors, it's not just the behavior of the excavators and locators, it is also about who holds the check and what expectations they have when it comes to the behaviors of the companies they hire to "get the job done."

Can this really happen? Sure, it can. Will it ever happen? Sure, it will. When? When the first company steps out and leads the way.

If 50 in 5 is achievable, it is only achievable when we change our behaviors. All of us! 



Sustaining Member Spotlight



**Grady
Crawford**
**CONSTRUCTION
COMPANY INC.**

Grady Crawford Construction Company, Inc.

GCCCI has completed or is currently working on projects involving the following types of construction: communications (buried and aerial), wireless communications, electrical, sewer, water, horizontal directional drilling, manhole installation and foundations, pipeline services, gas distribution and transmission, industrial petrochemical, drainage, and civil site work. There are very few contractors in the industry today that have the experience and expertise to self-perform so many facets of utility

construction. The experience GCCCI has obtained over the years allows us to pursue very complex or challenging projects. We have the talent in-house to handle large projects that require all types of construction expertise.

Our partnership and being a sustaining member with LA One Call is a vital role to our success in this industry. Keeping up to date with changes in the Dig Law effects every aspect of our business and procedures. The way LA 811 communicates with its members is exactly how the excavator community should work with utility owners and operators. It's all a partnership; communicating and documenting that communication is the key to a successful damage prevention program.

www.gradycrawford.com; 800-284-4493

Covington Sales & Service, Inc.

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.

Contact info: Covington Sales & Service, Inc.

7868 Florida Blvd.

Denham Springs, La 70726

1-225-664-7427 or 1-800-349-8000

www.covingtonsales.com



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Our Values – Integrity. Quality. Service

At GROBNER, our company decisions and processes are guided by our values of integrity, quality and service. Every employee is an integral part of our mission to make these values real in all our dealings with customers, suppliers, and each other. We're honored to work with all of you in pursuit of this goal.

About Us: <https://www.groebner.com/page/about/>

WHO IS GROEBNER

GROBNER specializes in selling, stocking, and advising on natural gas products from the pipeline to the meter. We are also a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) through WBENC that can add diversity to your supply chain.

We also support customers with team training and equipment maintenance services.

www.grobner.com – Contact Deana Hermosillo – 612-930-0900



T2 Utility Engineers

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

T. Baker Smith



T. Baker Smith, LLC (TBS) is a fully integrated, professional consulting firm committed to delivering successful project outcomes for our clients in the public works, exploration and production, pipeline, industrial, and land development markets we serve. TBS'

disciplined professionals serve as trusted advisors to our clients by engaging their challenges, framing innovative solutions, and providing responsive service during all phases of project delivery.

When it comes to buried utilities, what you don't know can really hurt your budget and schedule. TBS' Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE) team of expert engineers, surveyors, and technicians delivers reliable buried utility data to keep clients' projects on track and within budget. Our Utility Risk Management solutions start with uncovering what is buried under your proposed project site, minimizing utility-related risks and uncertainties. TBS works closely with clients to arrive at the appropriate quality level(s) for each project and performs SUE services in accordance with the ASCE 38 guideline and industry standards. This is achieved by collaboratively determining specific project and client needs, then employing an iterative approach in pursuit of each quality level. With decades of experience and an extensive in-house equipment suite, we achieve all four quality levels of utility depictions.

LA 811 provides the safety that is needed for excavators and the community daily, and TBS has those same safety standards. Ensuring everyone goes home safe is one of our core behaviors and foundational pillars. Thank you, LA 811, for your help keeping those in the industry safe.

Enforcement Updates



Greg Galle has been a familiar part of PAL meetings, Digger's Nights Out, Conferences, and other pipeline industry events since coming on board with the Office of Conservation in 2016. Prior to that, Greg spent twenty-six years in law enforcement, retiring from the Louisiana Department of Justice, where he served as an investigator and Special Assistant to the Attorney General. A recent organizational revamp by Pipeline Division Director Steven Giambrore has found Greg in his newest role – that of Conservation Program Manager in the Damage Prevention Section.

Greg's time in law enforcement and in the private sector as a National Corporate Compliance Manager for one of the country's largest private security firms has prepared him for this leadership role. According to Greg, his greatest asset in this new role is the support from senior management.

This move comes during a time of growth as the Damage Prevention Section is preparing to add another agent in North Louisiana in order to strengthen enforcement in that area. In

addition to Greg's new duties, he will continue to provide service in the Southeast part of our State. To greater enhance compliance, all other agents of the Pipeline Division supplement the Damage Prevention Section as needed.

While enforcement action is thought to be punitive in nature, using fines and penalties to correct non-compliance, Greg believes that the first component of enforcement is education. Enforcement begins with getting damage prevention information out to the various stakeholders. This is accomplished through the various industry meetings and conferences that take place, by word of mouth, and through the efforts of Louisiana 811.

Louisiana 811 has a wealth of information and training available at louisiana811.com that fortifies the compliance efforts. There are still some folks who either just can't get it right, don't believe that the laws pertain to them, or just don't follow laws. For these individuals and companies, the Dig Law provides for fines that can range up to \$200,000 per day per violation.

The impetus behind all of the compliance and enforcement efforts is safety. This job, according to Greg, "allows me to see the fruits of my labor, as non-compliant excavators begin conforming, and damages are curtailed." While Louisiana remains one of the top states in the country in terms of pipeline mileage, we have also maintained safety with those assets. Safety is everyone's concern and responsibility. Anyone with knowledge of unsafe excavation practices or a violation of the dig law can contact the Damage Prevention via a toll-free hotline at 1-833-726-0410 or by email to pipelineinspectors@la.gov. Information on the Section's efforts can be found on the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Conservation website. 

TOP 3

Root causes of damages

1. No notification made to 811 Center

2. Facility not marked due to locator error

3. Excavator failed to maintain clearance after verifying marks

Locate Rodeo



When: Thursday January 25, 2024 at 1:00pm

Where: L'Auberge Baton Rouge (registration in parking garage)

Price: \$25 per person

GRAND PRIZE FOR OVERALL CHAMPION \$1000 CASH!

There will also be cash prizes and plaques awarded for 2nd and 3rd place overall.

Visit www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com to register!



*2022 Locator of the Year Small Member Company
Darrell Langley, Simpra Cameron Interstate Pipeline*

Locator of the Year Award

Nominations are now being accepted for the Locator of the Year 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.

www.locatoroftheyear.com

*Working together to create
Louisiana solutions for
Louisiana issues.*

LOUISIANA
damage prevention
summit
A CGA REGIONAL PARTNER EVENT



January 23-25, 2024
L'Auberge, Baton Rouge



*We will be talking about change and
how to present it...
Join us!*

www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com

For more information:

501-548-6363

thesummit@aligningchange.com



The State of Broadband with ConnectLA

By Veneeth Iyengar
Executive Director

ConnectLA, or the Louisiana Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity, has one goal: eliminate the digital divide in the state by 2029. While this may seem like a daunting task, it is one area where Louisiana is actually leading the country in terms of policy setting.

Broadband allows Louisianians and businesses access to the most basic amenities needed in the 21st century. Internet access has become a critical piece of infrastructure, igniting economic growth and competitiveness. As internet expands, we recognize inequalities for those who do not have the access, tools and skills needed to participate in the digital world. Eliminating the digital divide ensures that all Louisianians have access to these vital services.

The state has already awarded 18 internet service providers more than \$130 million to connect more than 66,000 homes and businesses in 50 parishes. Infrastructure for these projects needs to be resilient to weather damage, something all too common in Louisiana. To do this, we are incentivizing providers to bury fiber-optic cables and build redundant systems to ensure fewer outages and improve emergency response measures.

The initial grants were funded by the Capital Projects Fund from the American Rescue Plan. The next round of projects will be funded by the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

You may have heard that Louisiana was awarded roughly \$1.4 billion from the IIJA to expand broadband networks to every home, business and community anchor institution in the state. To receive this funding, ConnectLA is required to submit an Initial Proposal, which details all locations that are eligible for funding, how the state will administer a grant round to providers and other programs the funding will go to.

Something we are very proud of at ConnectLA is that we were the first

state to submit Volumes 1 and 2 of the Initial Proposal and the first state to receive approval of Vol. 1. The final step to be able to use IIJA funding is to receive approval of Vol. 2.

Vol. 2 addresses the state's unique challenges with geography and workforce. It emphasizes the need for a robust workforce to build and maintain broadband infrastructure. Providing broadband access is not enough; it is crucial that we invest in the "future of work activities."

That is all great news for the state, but how do these achievements translate into tangible results for Louisianians? While it may not be very visible right now, big improvements are coming. Once the administrative hoops are all jumped through, providers will be able to start building new infrastructure and getting people connected.

In October, ConnectLA launched a challenge process to determine which locations are eligible for funding through the IIJA. Local governments, internet service providers and non-profit organizations were able to view the most recent FCC service availability map and submit challenges based on whether a location is marked as served or unserved.

This will lead into the next step of the process: announcing and distributing grants to service providers. The goal is to launch a grant round between March and May of 2024. Project areas, the type of infrastructure to be used, project timelines and the state's financial contribution will be determined for each project in this phase.

To address concerns with infrastructure projects causing damage to existing

utility lines, ConnectLA has attended Louisiana Gas Association conferences to understand how telecom workers can avoid conflicts entirely. Possible solutions include requiring 811 training for contractors, evaluating providers' safety track records and requiring plans to prevent accidents in the grant application.

The issue of damaging existing utility lines goes back to our plans regarding workforce development. To help ensure a skilled workforce, ConnectLA has partnered with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to promote the Certified Premises Cabling Technician and Certified Fiber Optic Technician programs. All technical and community colleges in the state offer these programs.

Not only will this ensure that trained Louisianians are working on these jobs, but it will also help decrease the amount of accidents that occur by effectively training telecom employees.

If there's one message we hope to convey, it is that eliminating the digital divide is about more than just expanding broadband networks so that people can stream movies. We have an opportunity to give Louisianians jobs, improve residents' health, reduce the "brain drain," stimulate our economy and put Louisiana on the map, all by giving high-speed internet to those who have been left without.

In this day in age, a broadband connection and the wherewithal to use it are essential for our residents to thrive. ConnectLA is dedicated to leveraging all stakeholders to work toward a better future for Louisianians. 



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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.**

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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.

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. 



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I Was Born To Do This!

See that 811 sticker on the gas meter? Hats off to Sensus, the manufacturer of the meter for putting the “call 811 before you dig” sticker on the meter. Ferguson Waterworks is a major distributor for utilities, both privately owned and municipal. A big shout out to Marshall Harris, the Municipal Sales Manager for Ferguson Waterworks for pointing out the sticker and for being a promoter of “call 811 before you dig.”

When asked how long he had worked at Ferguson, he replied “Forty-four years.” Forty-four years is a long time, what are your retirement plans? He responded with a story, “I heard Bob Segar of Bob Segar and the Silver Bullet Band answer that same question once and never forgot it. It is my response when I’m asked about retirement. I like what do and as long as I can make a difference, I’ll never stop doing what I’m doing. I was born to do this.”

You can talk to Marshall for a short while and understand that long ago, he learned it is not so much about selling as it is about relationships. Marshall, thanks for being a great ambassador to all utility owners and operators and thanks for the reminder to call Louisiana 811 before we dig! 🛠️



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