2024 Issue 4

Louisiana 811

The Conflict of CLAIMS

page 10

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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.







from the desk of

Brent Saltzman



Fall is upon us, and I am certain you are like me and appreciate a break from the heat as we wind down 2024. As the year comes to a close, know that Louisiana 811 is busy preparing for 2025.

As mentioned in my last column, we will be rolling out the latest piece of legislation in January with a Large Project Excavation & Demolition. We have been working hard outlining and finalizing the details of implementing this new tool.

If you are going to be involved with a large project lasting for more than 20 calendar days (such as road or dredging projects or a large-scale single address building project) you will want to take advantage of utilizing this new option. Contact our administrative team at https://www.louisiana811.com/resource-center for more information to learn more details and I highly encourage you to read the article in this issue outlining the basics of this type of ticket.

Another project in the works is a Pre-Design ticket type. This will specifically benefit engineering firms during the design phase of a project. It will also benefit our members (owner/operators of underground facilities) because use of this type of ticket will prevent usage of a routine ticket intended for excavation and demolition purposes only. We have included a detailed article in this issue outlining how this process works along with a helpful flowchart.

There are a multitude of other projects in the works that we will be sharing in the coming month or so. To keep abreast of the latest news, please check out one of our many social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X, or Instagram. We will also send out a newsletter within the next few weeks so watch out for more news to come.

I am extremely excited to share a couple of other new developments within our LA811 staff. I am happy to announce the promotion of Billy Forest to Manager-Damage Prevention! Billy has been on our team for over two years and has a wealth of Dig Law and utility construction knowledge. I am also happy to report that Raymond Sonnier has joined our team as a Damage Prevention Coordinator reporting to Billy. Raymond has been involved with damage prevention in the utility sector for many years and has hit the ground running.

Please join me in congratulating these two gentlemen and take advantage of their services. These are two of four individuals who are willing to provide a damage prevention presentation for your next safety meeting and can answer questions related to our program. They are here to help you get your project done!

Finally, much work has already been done but more to do in preparation for our annual Louisiana Damage Prevention Summit. Save the date for January 28-30, 2025, for this outstanding educational event that will be held for the first time in Lafayette. Click this link for more details: https://www.louisiana.damagepreventionsummit.com/.

Until next time, stay safe and God bless.

Brent Saltzman Executive Director Louisiana 811

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Contact Louisiana 811 for specifics in their dig law.

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Louisiana 811

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GLOBAL damage prevention SUMMIT

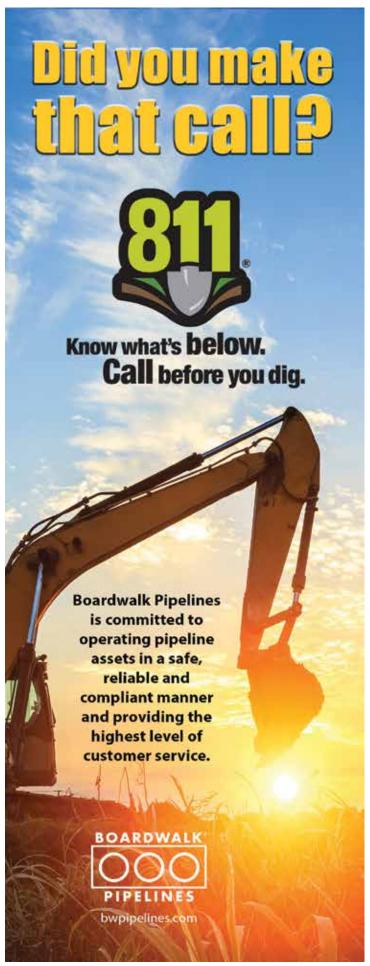
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Operations Numbers Through September 2024

As of 9/30/24, Louisiana 811 has 1,087 Participating Members.

Incoming Locate Requests:

2023 - 617,436

2024 - 563,479 (-8.74% decrease)

Outgoing Notifications:

2023 – 2,986,031

2024 -2,717,840 (-8.98% decrease)

Call Ratio (Incoming notifications to Outgoing Members)

2023 - 1:4.84

2024 – 1:4.85

On-Line Ticket Entry

2023-89.86%

2024-89.95%



ACTS Company Members make the ACTS mission possible supporting the continued growth of this incredible community, over 2,000 individual members and growing. Scan the QR code to view the benefits of becoming an individual and company ACTS member, supporting damage prevention and excavation safety year-round.



ww.actsnowinc.com/member











































COMPANY MEMBERS



Call 811 before you dig



Your safety is our number one priority.

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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-ENTERGY** (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.[™]

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"I wish we had more of a notice"



By Billy Forest Manager - Damage Prevention Louisiana 811



he holidays are coming soon, and I hope everyone is preparing to enjoy the seasons with family and friends. As they quickly approach, we must not forget that Louisiana is undergoing many infrastructure improvements. The new Broadband installation is one of the improvements that has everyone's attention. As many of us work through the beginning phases of this project, we have already noticed some roadblocks for all parties involved.

After participating in many discussions and with multiple stakeholders involved in this project, it seems everyone has the same mission. Although each of us plays a different role in this massive undertaking, the focus is still on preventing damage to existing utilities. As many people discuss this issue, I hear the majority voicing the same concerns. Timeframe and money seem to drive this entire

In this rush to get infrastructure installed, many of our local citizens are feeling the effects. This impact will leave a long-lasting impression on the communities that get fiber installed. Even with all the distractions, I hope that everyone can take the time to remember that no matter what role you play in this project, your actions impact others directly. Soon we will be in the busiest part of this build and from the words of many associated with this project, please remember communication is key!

The most common statements that I have heard are, "I wish we had more of a notice" or "we didn't know about this build until we received the 811-ticket notification." Not enough notice to prepare staff for the demand is a very common statement also mentioned during the meetings. Many of us are feeling the impact and trying to make a difference. Let us all try to communicate

Start the gift of giving by increasing the notice of the intent to install fiber in rural communities. Submit the 811 tickets for the installation and meet all state requirements. Submit your tickets in a manner that allows you to install your utility but does not put a burden on the existing utilities. When in doubt please contact the Louisiana 811 Notification Center and someone can give you free training on how to submit tickets correctly and efficiently. Submitting a ticket incorrectly puts a tremendous burden on the system and results in downtime. Let's face it, downtime means you have lost money and productivity. This is a bad result for everyone involved in this broadband

Once the excavator has done their part in communicating properly and all the correct tools in the process have been utilized, we ask that all utility operators, large or small, increase the communication and follow all the processes and laws that have been put in place by our predecessors.

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes to all.





By Raymond Sonnier Louisiana 811

Louisiana 811 Goes to College



esterday, I had the privilege of presenting to a great group of Lineman Students at South Louisiana Community College, discussing Louisiana 811 state law and safety practices around gas. It was an honor to share this important knowledge alongside my friends from CenterPoint Energy and Atmos Energy, whose expertise and support made it all possible.

Thank you to South Louisiana Community College for the opportunity to contribute to your Certified Power Line Worker Training program. Your commitment to hands-on, real-world training is shaping the next generation of industry professionals!

Also, a huge shoutout to the students for their engagement and eagerness to learn about damage prevention and safety, your dedication to the craft is inspiring. Also, special thanks to their instructor Kevin Benoit!

Together, we're building a safer future!





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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.

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Pre-Design Ticket Coming January 2025

he Louisiana 811 Board of Directors and Staff have been working hard to search for ideas that would assist designers/ surveyors in determining the location of our members' underground and submerged utilities/facilities. Historically, designers enter locate requests and members may or may not respond to such notices resulting in frustration from both parties. A recent amendment to the Louisiana Underground Utilities & Facilities Damage Prevention Law (Dig Law) solidified membership's opinion regarding this matter by stating that the law is specifically for excavation and demolition purposes only (reference RS 40:1749.13 A.). However, it is apparent that the services provided by designers/ surveyors are invaluable and ultimately benefit the Louisiana 811 members.

After some research around the country, it was discovered that Iowa One Call had a robust program that has been in place for years and apparently works very well

for both parties. The board and staff reviewed the process with several engineering firms and have decided to mimic Iowa's process and implement a Pre-Design ticket that will go into effect in January 2025.

Here is how this process will work:

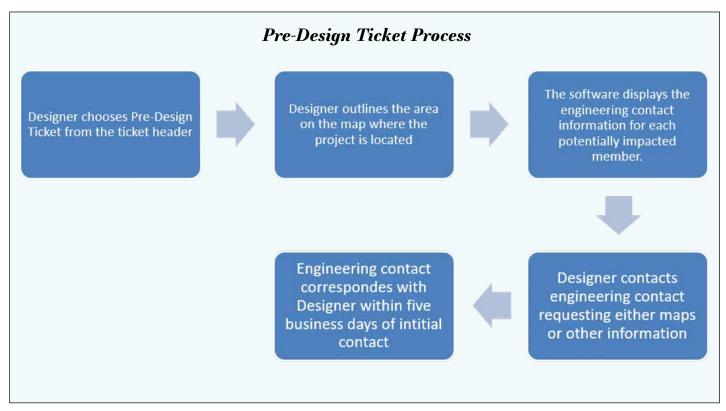
- 1. A "Pre-Design" ticket header will be selected by a designer/surveyor.
- The area of the proposed work area would be outlined online like any other ticket.
- 3. The system (software) would generate a mock ticket indicating the impacted members and will display a member's engineering contact information (an email address and possibly a phone number).
- 4. After initial contact from the designer/surveyor, it would be the engineering contact's responsibility to respond to the designer/surveyor within

five (5) business days with either asbuilt drawings, detailed maps, or any other information sufficient to aid in the design work of the project.

The graphic below is a flowchart outlining this process.

Louisiana 811 is actively soliciting engineering contact information from each of its existing members and has changed the membership application to gather this data from new members. Ultimately, both parties (designers and LA811 members) will benefit by using this new feature because engineering projects oftentimes are designed to avoid existing infrastructure.

Please contact the Louisiana 811 team if you have any questions regarding this process. Our staff will be actively educating its stakeholders in the coming weeks and months leading up to the implementation of the Pre-Design ticket.





Sustaining Member **Spotlight**



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We also strongly advocate for the use of 811 to ensure underground utility lines are properly marked before excavation, helping to prevent accidents, service disruptions, and costly damages. We want to extend a special thanks to Louisiana 811 for their dedication to safety and for making sure everyone goes home safe at night. Their efforts are vital in maintaining the safety and integrity of natural gas infrastructure.

For more information about GROEBNER, visit www.groebner.com.







The Conflict DAY A LANGE CONFICE

By Roger Cox President ACTS Now, Inc.

uch talk surrounds the topic of damage prevention across the nation today. While there are pockets of improvement in some cases, there appears to be stalemate nationwide on reducing damages. Actually, there seems to be an upward trend in damage to underground utility lines.

It is a fair question to ask why this is the case. The answer falls along the lines of "the disadvantages of preventing damages outweigh the advantages of preventing damages," so the motivation to change behaviors to prevent damages has not been clearly established.

Here are a couple of things I've learned about underground utility damage prevention. Slogans are easier to come up with than preventing damage. Identifying what people ought to do is easier than getting them to do it. If we know that preventing damage is about building relationships and clearer communication, we don't need to wait for new technology or some

organization to come up with a whizbang plan to start making it happen.

For example, have you paid attention to a damage investigation program? I've attended many such classes in my almost 50 years in the industry and for the most part they haven't changed much since day one. Damage or accident investigations have been carried out for decades and the purpose of them was to determine why it happened and what can be done to prevent similar incidents.

However, most of the utility damage investigation classes I've attended focus on liability and claims. There is nothing wrong with that focus, but it seems to be a limited viewpoint. As a practical matter, I believe the highest and best use of a claims department in our industry is to collect for damages to their utility lines.

When discussing collections with claims personnel, when they can collect for damage, they rightly feel like they've done their job. Their process seems to have someone in the company perform an investigation, take photos, determine who is responsible and turn it over to claims.

What would happen if we could turn that damage investigation into damage prevention by refocusing on the purpose of the investigation itself? If the purpose was still to determine what happened and what we could do to prevent the recurrence, both liability and collections would be a by-product of an effective damage investigation.

A product of an effective damage investigation is to develop a relationship with stakeholders. That relationship is strengthened by conversations based on what the investigation uncovers. When we discuss the facts uncovered by the investigation, it becomes the springboard for higher expectations brought about by personal communication, rather than just an invoice.

CLAIMS

What would happen if we could turn that damage investigation into damage prevention by refocusing on the purpose of the investigation itself?

Having said that, I am not saying we shouldn't have claims departments. We should! However, it has been proven to me more than once that a claims department is measured by a different measurement than a damage prevention department. It follows if we really want to reduce damage to our vital underground utilities, we need to take a second look at our current efforts.

Since 2017 I have served the Mississippi Enforcement Board as its Executive Secretary. In that role, my office receives all complaints filed in the state. These complaints are the result of alleged violations committed by an industry stakeholder. They could be levied against the excavator for a variety of reasons, such as not calling 811 before digging, digging early, not potholing as required by law or failing to white line as required by law. Equally, complaints are filed against the utility company for several reasons, mostly for failure to locate, not locating on time or failure to locate accurately.

Often, the documentation submitted which would include photos and other pertinent information to prove the allegation does not meet the burden of proof. Talking with others across the country in similar roles, this is a common occurrence.

Without a thorough and complete damage investigation with the purpose of finding out what happened and what can be done to prevent it from happening again, you will not reduce damages and for that matter, you will not have an effective enforcement program.

Finally, the investigation doesn't benefit damage reduction if it doesn't trigger the damage prevention department to address the issue with the appropriate stakeholders.

Okay, I get it. You say that won't work. You might be right! But what we're doing now is clearly not working, so it might be worth considering.

Stay tuned!



Lake Charles' Diggers' Night Out Was a HUGE Success!



big thank you to the Lake Charles Utility Coordinating Council for putting on such a fantastic event. It was amazing to see so many dedicated excavators, utility professionals, and colleagues come together for a night of collaboration about all things utilities.

The turnout was incredible, and the sponsors truly went all out with some amazing door prizes. The food was delicious, and the atmosphere was filled with camaraderie and valuable discussions around safety and best practices in the field. This is the secret sauce to damage prevention!

Special shout-out to our guest speakers Greg Galle and the Executive Director of Louisiana 811, Brent Saltzman, who both delivered insightful presentations on damage prevention and the importance of working together to keep our communities safe. Their words resonated with everyone in attendance. Thank you to our MC, Damage Prevention Manager, Billy Forest.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended, participated and supported this event. Together, we're making our work safer and more efficient every day!







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From the Locator's

Troubleshooting a Problem Locate

By Bob Nighswonger

ot too long ago, I was assisting a locator with some tech support on a locating issue. When troubleshooting a problem locate, I approach the problem by focusing on three core components of a locatable circuit: the signal transmitter, the underground utility, and the grounding conditions. If any of these three components are not ideal, we have no signal or weak signals which make locating very difficult if not impossible.

In this case, my fellow locator who had been in my training class earlier in the year was facing an issue where the transmitter was producing very low current flow and had text me for some advice. Most locating technicians understand that when current flows on a metallic pipe, cable or wire it creates a detectable signal wave, without current we have no signal wave. The greater the current level (amps) the stronger the force of the signal wave. Strong signal waves can be located at greater depths and greater distances. Low current output levels result in weak jumpy signal waves that are unreliable.

The locator directly connected the signal transmitter to the tracer wire which was accessible from a water valve and buried with the water main and connected the transmitter's black lead to a ground stake at the corner. (Figure 1)

We started first by examining the signal transmitter. The transmitter is responsible for sending the current down the line which creates the detectable signal field, so ensuring it's functioning correctly was our first step. We looked at the output readings of the transmitter which showed the transmitter was applying almost 30



Figure 1 Direct Connection method used to directly apply signal current to tracer wire. (only 2 mA achieved)



Figure 3 Locator confirms metal to metal connection is made between connection clip and copper tracer wire.



Figure 2 Signal transmitter shows 29.9 volts of electrical pressure with only 2 mA of current flow achieved.



Figure 4 Locator confirms connection leads are in working order by clipping them together and confirming current flow.

volts of electrical pressure which only resulting in 2 (mA) milliamps of current flow. (Figure 2)

The voltage pressure is what places the signal current into motion, so we had a lot of pressure and very little flow coming from the transmitter. Increasing the power output pressure of the transmitter did not help increase the current flow and changing the frequencies did nothing to help this situation either so we eliminated transmitter settings as the issue

We then looked at the quality of the connection points and the health of the transmitters wire leads used for direct connection. The locator made sure there was a direct metal to metal connection between the red connection lead and the end of the tracer wire and not it's protective coating. (Figure 3) The black connection clip directly connected to the ground stake checked as well.

To verify the health and continuity of the signal transmitter's direct connection wires, the locator connected the red and black transmitter leads directly together, which produced 20 mA reading which is exactly where it was supposed to be on this transmitter model. A signal transmitters connection leads which consist of wires which can break, metal clips which can were out over time reducing it effectiveness. This confirmed that the transmitter was working perfectly, allowing us to rule it out as the cause of the problem as output settings or broken connection leads. (Figure 4)



Figure 5 Locator tried improving grounding conditions by adding water to the ground stake

Next, we focused on the grounding conditions. (Figure 5) The ground acts as the return path for the signal, and poor grounding can significantly affect the circuit's performance. To improve the grounding, the locator poured water on and around the ground stake and pressed it deeper

TIP Soapy water helps the dirt stick to the ground stake with less electrical resistance.

into the earth to increase conductivity and lower resistance at the point of direct connection between the signal transmitter and the earth. *TIP soapy water helps the dirt stick to the ground stake with less electrical resistance. The locator then changed grounding connections from the temporary ground stake to a metal stop sign post for better and deeper connection to earth. (Figure 6) However, even after improving and changing the direct ground connection, the transmitters output current remained the same level of 2 mA, meaning the grounding wasn't the issue. With both the transmitter and the grounding ruled out, we were left with the buried conductor.

The copper tracer wire, which is supposed to carry the signal along the



Figure 6 Locator tried to improving grounding by connecting to a larger and deeper grounding connection - a stop sign.



Figure 7 Locator moved transmitter to a different location and was successfully able to generate a signal through the dig area.

length of the utility, became the next suspect. If there's a break or a faulty splice in the wire, it could prevent the signal from traveling properly. To test this theory, we decided to move the transmitter upstream to a different valve for access to the tracer wire. and connect to a different point along the utility. (Figure 7) From this new location, the locator was able to trace the signal almost all the way back to the original point of connection where the signal disappeared, which strongly indicated that the tracer wire had been damaged near the original point of connection.

Ultimately, we determined that the problem was likely due to a break in the tracer wire near the original access point. By systematically evaluating the transmitter, grounding, and conductor, we were able to isolate the issue and confirm that the original tracer wire at the first valve was the weak point in the circuit.

Traveling with Louisiana [1].



NorthShore Utility Council 7th Annual Digger's Night Out

JP Dunbar, Raymond Sonnier and Billy Forest with Louisiana 811 want to thank all of the attendees and sponsors of this wonderful event





A big shout-out to Kevin Bono and his Damage Prevention Team from St. Tammany/STSC for leading this fantastic partnership with Cleco and Louisiana 811 Truck Wraps.





Thanks to Energy Transfer for its outstanding outreach. Their **Damage Prevention** Team has taken it to the next level!



Damage Prevention in Action!

I had an incredible time presenting on damage prevention with friends, Billy with Louisiana 811, Molly Smith, Greg Galle and Nathan! This is what damage prevention is all about! When Louisiana 811, the Department of Energy and Natural Resources, and gas utility operators come together to share the message, it truly becomes a shared responsibility.

Together, we can make a difference!



Take Aways

By Joe Igel

n this, my last article for this publication, I sought a topic or topics that would be meaningful to my audience and thus to me. I tried to find a humorous and meaningful anecdote to open with but failed. It seemed that over the years, I had covered all aspects of my safety background, my perspective on the topic of underground damage prevention. And then, the realization came, that the experiences I have shared with you have bridged at least six years. How would I summarize those that I wanted you to remember, to use, to pass along? After some thought, I settled on the following six, in no order.

Continually review and assess your procedures

With changes in statutes, technology, personnel, and perspectives, continually reviewing and assessing your procedures and policies is critical. I have seen too many failures when an old system did not consider something new.

Fix first, then investigate and determine cause

Damage investigation is a key element in fixing problems. However, your priority should always be to resolve the problem, stop the leak, notify the proper authorities, and most importantly to guard the safety of all. Then, when that has been addressed, a thorough investigation of the cause can be conducted. And please remember to include what you have instructed and what you have done in the investigation.



Changing Behavior

The investigative process should always focus on improving processes, changing behavior. Yes, at times, disciplinary action will be necessary. However, the long game requires behavior change. Corrective actions should focus on the reason for the failures and redirect efforts toward understanding the proper action to take and doing it.

Make your values in the damage prevention arena known

There should be a philosophy, a value, a goal for all your work, and one that involves safety and damage prevention. And it should apply to everyone. If it is absent, you will find yourself continually answering the same questions and assessing the same problems. Ensuring all employees, particularly supervisors, know these values will empower them to take the proper and safe actions you would want if you were present.

Admit responsibility when it exists

If there is a mistake, and your investigation supports that conclusion, admit it, pay up and move on, correcting future behavior. If all your processes were acceptable or better, and failure is not yours, be an advocate for what was done by your team. And if there is a shared responsibility, seek a sharing of any fallout, fines, or consequences.

Focus on cooperation

This last item has, through my 30 years or so of experience, become what I consider the most important lesson, one that I wish I had learned much earlier. I have seen many individuals who keep a mental scorecard of "wins" and "losses" that they have experienced. It may assess OSHA violations, it may list successful defenses of damage claims, and/or workers' compensation hearings results.

I would argue that defending your company, your organization is an important part of your job. Tracking losses and failures is important. But I often see a "gotcha" mentality. More effort is invested in the attempt to put the "adversary" in their place. In Ohio, a successful compliance complaint can result in a fine for the offending party. It puts nothing back in the pocket of the party filing the complaint, who may have experienced a loss.

I see more benefits and success from taking that same amount of time and sitting down with the party that provides your organization difficulty. I did this a long time ago with a utility company. I witnessed how they screened and reviewed tickets, hearing suggestions on how we could improve our locate requests. Before departing my impromptu lesson, I obtained a list of contacts who could offer me assistance when I hit a rough spot. It paid huge dividends and provided a lesson that I carry to this day.

And that concludes my highlights. I hope it does not resemble a sitcom repeating clips of old shows to use as a filler episode. And I hope that these may offer you service. I wish you safety and success now and in the future.

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



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