

The Virginia811 Dirt

WORKING AS ONE, TO GET THE JOB DONE



VA811'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER / SEPTEMBER 2020





Letter from the CEO

In 2015, a Virginia Tech leadership program within which I taught asked if I was available to conduct a workshop series for Virginia811. I had never heard of Virginia811, but I indicated I would love to help. As I prepared for the three days that I would spend with the Virginia811 team, I learned about the thousands of miles of underground utilities they help to protect and about how the team plays an important role in protecting life and property. However, the most important thing I would learn was yet to come – that lesson unfolded when I had the pleasure of working with the team over three days in December 2015.

The time I spent with the team was an amazing experience. I had never witnessed such a large number of a team passionately embrace the “why” of what they do. I remember the look on a young Damage Prevention Specialist’s face, Missy, when I asked the “why” of what they do. She became serious and stated, “we help to make sure people are not hurt.” I was touched by her sincerity, and I found that each group over those three days expressed a similar commitment to safety. I learned that not only is the work Virginia811 does important; it is something more than “work;” it is a passion.

I discovered in that December that Virginia811 has a special team committed to public safety. As 2016 unfolded, I continued to cross paths with the President & CEO, and founder, Rick Pevarski. In the Fall of 2016, Rick reached out to me and asked if I wanted to join that very special team. I was beyond flattered. In December 2016, I became a part of that team serving as Director of Operations. And now, almost four years later, I find myself writing this portion of The Dirt. Honored does not even begin to convey how I feel.

I have increasingly come to appreciate how many individuals within Virginia811, the SCC, and all stakeholder groups contributed to a story that has dramatically helped reduce damages to underground utilities over a span of almost two decades.

That work is important, and it matters. That work continues to be reflected in my mind as I remember Missy’s expression as she stated: “we help to make sure people are not hurt.”

Now, with so many individuals working at home due to COVID, all of us involved in protecting underground utilities find even a heavier weight to ensure we do what we do to the best of our ability. Keeping the underground utility infrastructure safe is now protecting not only life and property, it is allowing the economy to remain active and allow individuals to remain employed.

I am proud to serve in this new role at Virginia811. I am proud to work alongside amazing individuals who have a passion to serve, dedication to safety. I am proud to play a role in helping to protect Virginia’s underground utilities. I am proud to now be Missy’s co-worker, hopefully giving her the support that she, and all of our DPS, needs to serve our stakeholders.

Together, we will continue to build upon the strong foundation Rick Pevarski established. I believe our continued success will rely on a key principle behind Virginia811’s alignment with ISO certification: continuous improvement.

We will be focusing on continuously improving three key areas: mapping, ticket QA/QC, and marketing. We will explore how to leverage our mapping software and mapping GIS data to increase our ability to locate excavation areas. We will explore how artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies can be developed to ensure we have even stronger auditing efforts in place. We will be launching a new marketing initiative to get Virginia811 messaging even more in the public eye.

I am excited to work with you all. I look forward to getting to know those of you whom I have not met, and getting to know those I have met, better. Together, we will strive to reach 0 damages!

Benjamin Scott Crawford

Introducing Virginia811 Academy

New online training will soon be available

Imagine having training available at the touch of a button and on your schedule! Bringing this opportunity to our stakeholders is the vision behind the Virginia811 Academy. The new Academy will offer those wishing to set up Web Ticket Entry accounts a convenient way to receive the training they need to enter tickets confidently and safely. Through this online, and predominantly video-based, instruction, participants can not only review material at their own pace, they will have access to these resources for reference as they begin to enter tickets. Whether it's learning how to process a notice of excavation for the first time or a quick refresher course on how to fill out a single address ticket, Virginia811 Academy will have all that and more.

The Virginia811 Academy is designed to offer a series of courses that range from entry level training that will help participants get started with processing a ticket to more advanced options that will provide instruction on how to process more complex tickets. Self-directed learning modules containing diverse instructional materials will engage participants as they familiarize themselves with the software used to process tickets to notify utilities and locators in order to get underground utilities marked. Eventually, chat functions through the Academy will allow participants to communicate with Virginia811 Damage Prevention Specialists who can answer questions about related content. There will also be the opportunity for participants to register to attend live virtual training in a group setting and make use of the digital resources to enhance their learning experience.



While the conceptualization of and planning for the Virginia811 Academy began in 2019, the recent Pandemic has reminded us all the value web-based technologies hold. COVID-19 undermined in-person instruction and training, yet video conferencing has allowed Virginia811 to continue to offer Web Ticket Entry training opportunities. The Virginia811 Academy will carry this value forward, with the direction of our Professional Development Specialist, Susan Painter (pictured above), who will ensure a robust learning experience for participants.

The Virginia811 Academy will have a prominent location on Virginia811's website and will be designed to meet everyone's learning and resource needs. The first instructional materials should begin to be available toward the end of 2020.

Virginia811 and Roanoke City E-911 Ribbon Cutting

Public-private partnership for a shared space



Rick Pevarski, founder and former President & CEO of Virginia811 (pictured below), and Debbie Hofbauer, Virginia811 Head of Technology, Projects, and Procurement, identified a unique opportunity a few short years ago. Virginia811 recognized it needed a new space for operations. Coincidentally, Roanoke City 911 was focusing on the same plot of land in the Blue Hills Industrial Park for their new operations center! Meetings between Virginia811 and the City unfolded. Eventually both parties realized they could find cost savings by working together and creating a unique opportunity for a public-private partnership to build a shared space. On August 6, 2020, a ribbon-cutting event celebrated the culmination of that endeavor!

The ribbon-cutting was an amazing event at many levels. First, it marked the official “opening” of the Blue Hills Communications Center, a state-of-the-art data and call center for two entities devoted to public safety. While both parties have a call center component, both rely heavily on ensuring their facilities allow for redundancy and resiliency. Neither can afford to be down and unable to serve the public. Virginia811’s omnichannel presence, relying on Internet services to facilitate the processing of roughly 67% of its approximately 1.5 million annual locate requests, was quite sensitive to the need to create an operations center that did not have to worry about systems shutting down! The new Center allows Virginia811 to actually “sit” on a SONET ring, has a two-level roof system with sensors to detect moisture over the server room, and includes a dual generator system that increases the likelihood the Center can continue to operate under the most extreme circumstances. The 811-911 partnership’s cost saving plan allowed both services to tap into a level of resiliency and redundancy that would have been challenging and costly to reach independently.



Second, the ribbon-cutting was amazing as it unfolded during a period of social distancing and semi-isolation due to COVID. Virginia811 and Roanoke City worked together to create a virtual/physical ribbon cutting that was safe, yet still allowed the amazing Center to be showcased. Representatives from all local media, television, radio, and press, safely toured the building in small numbers, interviewing Rick Pevarski and Sonya Roman, the Roanoke City 911 Manager, several days prior to the ribbon cutting. The event itself included the Roanoke City Mayor, members of City Council, other dignitaries, and a small number of 811 and 911 team members and Roanoke citizens. A space was identified that allowed adequate social distancing during the event, and everyone wore masks. The event was streamed live through Facebook to reduce the number of those present. Natalie Soucie, Virginia811's new Head of Marketing and Communications, produced a video related to the building. The video launched immediately following the ribbon-cutting on a host of social media channels and can be found on our YouTube page.



Finally, the ribbon-cutting marked the official beginning of a very unique partnership. This initiative marks the first time ever, that 811 and 911 services have created a shared space from which to operate. This public-private initiative, involving two organizations united through a commitment to public safety, can potentially serve as a model, nationally, even globally, for similar endeavors.

Even though 100% of the Virginia811 team is currently working safely at home during the Pandemic, the Center is still playing a vital role in operations. Post-COVID, when a certain level of "normalcy" returns, the Virginia811 team looks forward to opening its doors to members and stakeholders so that they can visit and appreciate this amazing new Center. Until then, be sure to watch the virtual tour found through the link above!



New Team Members Join Marketing Department

Regional Marketing Liaisons join Virginia811

Three new marketing professionals were interviewed and onboarded virtually late this summer and are now working throughout the state to support stakeholders in their damage prevention efforts and Virginia811's marketing efforts. These new team members include:



Fernando Méndez: Regional Multi-Media Marketing Liaison

Location: Northern Virginia | fmendez@va811.com

Fernando Méndez is a multimedia specialist with over six years of experience in the public and private sectors. He holds a bachelor's degree in digital cinema production from the University of the Sacred Heart, and a Master's degree in Database Administration at the Inter-American University Metro Campus. Moreover, he's obtained several certifications in performing contract, program, and project management activities and functions with the Federal government. He is passionate about researching new multimedia techniques and how to implement them daily. Fernando is bilingual in English and Spanish and has extensive experience translating Spanish and complex material into easily digestible and visually compelling designs and infographics. In his spare time, he enjoys collaborative work, volunteering, playing sports, and spending time with his family and friends.



Kimberly Swope: Regional Digital Marketing Liaison

Location: Richmond | kswope@va811.com

A Richmond native, Kimberly is a design professional with over 10 years' experience in advertising, marketing, and project management. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communications from Virginia Commonwealth University and Associate Degrees in Graphic and Web Design from John Tyler Community College. She has the skills to create high-impact designs that strengthen company brands, marketing efforts, and web development goals. She has extensive experience with social media, video production, creating GIFs/ animation, and email campaigns. She is experienced in print production/magazine layout and event marketing. In her spare time, she enjoys creating art, time with family, and an occasional Netflix binge.



Alexis Harris: Regional Creative Design and Marketing Liaison

Location: Blacksburg/NRV | aharris@va811.com

Alexis is a recent Visual Arts graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Growing up, she was heavily influenced by the eclectic culture of the '80s and '90s. She continues to immerse herself in today's pop culture, as she exudes a youthful spirit. Over the years, Alexis has developed her media skills in photography, video, graphic design, and print media. She loves collaborating with others to create visually stunning work. You can catch her discovering gluten-free restaurants (or recipes), capturing moments with her Polaroid camera, discovering new indie-pop artists, or making nostalgic references.



Nikki Turpin: Regional External Training and Marketing Liaison

Location: Chesapeake and Eastern Shore | nturpin@va811.com

Nikki has been with Virginia811 for over two years and has been working with members and stakeholders to conduct both CBT and WTE training. During her tenure, she has been building relationships in the eastern shore region of Virginia and has developed an excellent reputation with our stakeholders. She has helped coordinate and host many public awareness events and meetings and enjoys building relationships - both new and old. Nikki has an infectious personality and helps coordinate our internal communication efforts and serves on our social committee.

Please help us in welcoming our new team members and feel free to reach out to the liaison in your area of the state to connect!

811 Day Activities

Celebrating the day looked a bit different this year



iRun for Virginia811
2020



Actions Speak Louder



UTILIQUEST



811 Day was a little challenging because of COVID-19 and Virginia811 remained committed to keeping staff safe, so 811 Day looked a little different from years past. Despite not being able to hold a special event, team members instead got creative. Virginia811 received good press coverage and initiated a couple virtual campaigns to celebrate the day.

Virginia811 decided to hold a virtual run called: iRun for Virginia811. The virtual event was launched on August 1st asking people to celebrate the day by participating in the run/walk between August 1 – 11th. Participants were asked to join in doing a 5k or an 8.11-mile run. If they did the 5k, they would receive an entry for a free prize. If they did the 8.11-mile run, they got two entries! Free t-shirts were also designed (photo below) and made available to those who registered for the run and posted a picture on Facebook or Instagram with the hashtag #irun4VA811. In the end, there were 160 participants and over 40 people who posted on social media. Daily prizes of 25-dollar gift cards to Lowe's were announced along with two grand prizes of a Yeti Cooler or \$811, which was given in the form of a large check to Deanna Marshall in Dublin and posted on social media.

Our CEO and marketing team members were also interviewed on various media outlets to talk about Virginia811 and 811 Day. Scott Crawford was interviewed on a local Radio News program. Nikki Turpin, Regional External Training and Marketing Liaison appeared in several television interviews in the Hampton Roads and Richmond areas, and Natalie Soucie, Head of Marketing and Communications, appeared on a local lifestyle show making "Dirt Cups" with her daughter to illustrate how to teach kids about underground utilities with a fun, cool treat to celebrate the day! Several news stations picked up the press release, ran stories on their newscasts, and wrote articles that were posted on their websites.

Finally, a geofencing campaign was launched to impactfully share the safe digging message via digital channels. People who visited a Lowe's or Home Depot store in the state of Virginia around 8/11 Day received targeted "811/Contact 811 Before You Dig" safety messages both on their phones and on Facebook, playing on the idea that those people are likely to be in-market for digging activities, or likely to complete digging activities at some time in the next several years.

While 811 Day looked a little different than in years past, it proves that with a little creativity, the message about reducing accidents and damages can still get out.

Golden Shovel Award Winner Announced! Cathy Waldron recognized for her dedication



Cathy Waldron

Cathy Waldron was recently recognized as the Golden Shovel Award winner for the second quarter of 2020!

Cathy has worked for Virginia811 since March of 2002. She has endeared herself to many members and locators during her service as Member Services Liaison, where she has demonstrated a dedication to making sure that their needs are met. 2020 has only added to her "legend".

Cathy has been busy performing her customary magic in a variety of ways during the second quarter. First, she worked with a utility contact to help improve their response to 3-hour notice tickets. This assistance lessened the need for excavators to get a second 3-hour notice, and ultimately allows them to go to work sooner.

Next, Cathy began work with the 13 utility members who have been using NDP's Web Ticket Management (TMS) software. NDP will discontinue support of that program at the end of 2020, and she notified nearly all of these members and shared ticket delivery options with them.

Last, but not least, Cathy took on a project working with 8 members to help them transition from receiving Virginia811 billing by mail to receipt by email. This provides a more secure receipt for the member while also streamlines the billing process for Virginia811.

Cathy also worked with a number of stakeholders during the quarter by troubleshooting issues and teaching them about various Virginia811 technologies.

Thanks, Cathy for all of your hard work, and congratulations on the recognition!

Virginia811 Continues to Support the Virginia Zoo Continues its sponsorship of the prairie dog exhibit



The Virginia Zoo is one of those state attractions that has been drastically affected by COVID-19 and is one of many organizations that Virginia811 loves to support. So, when they announced they were planning to hold their first Member Night in mid-August, with limited capacity and extreme safety precautions in place, Virginia811 was thrilled to be able to sponsor the evening.

Member night is a monthly event held for zoo members-only. Members are invited to the zoo after-hours to enjoy an evening with the animals and take advantage of special discounts. Virginia811 provided free ice cream to the first 200 members who came through the door. In addition, those in attendance received a Virginia811 goodie bag stuffed with cool swag.

Additionally, Virginia811 solidified its five-year community partnership earlier this year to sponsor the zoo's prairie dog exhibit. Virginia811 is happy to help support this opportunity and educate visitors about nature's masterful diggers. New signage is now displayed at the exhibit sharing details of how prairie dogs burrow into the ground to make their homes. It also explains what happens when humans dig and the dangers we can pose to nature, utilities, and ultimately, ourselves.

The Virginia Zoo continues to promote social distancing measures by limiting the number of individuals that visit as well as staggering entry times to ensure clusters of individuals are not forming. They have installed hand sanitizing stations throughout the zoo and promote wearing a mask. To visit the zoo and see the prairie dogs please go to www.virginiazoo.com to reserve your spot!



Employee Spotlight

New role will focus on trends in ticket quality



We are happy to announce that former Senior Damage Prevention Specialist, Anna Holtz (pictured), has accepted a new Quality Coordinator position! This exciting new role will be closely tied to ongoing efforts related to quality assurance and training with our Web Ticket Entry users. Anna formerly worked as a Web Ticket Entry Coordinator and has extensive experience coaching internally, so she is well-equipped for this new position. In her new role, Anna will continue to work with her teammates to ensure tickets are audited and daily goals are met, but she will also begin to focus more on external user training and will play an integral role in the development of new training resources. In addition to these responsibilities, Anna will also begin to observe and address trends in ticket quality to prevent errors that could lead to safety concerns. Anna looks forward to bringing forth more specialized training for new users and building a rapport with existing users. She is committed to the organization's goal of providing a safety service and plans to keep an open line of communication between Web Ticket Entry users and the Quality Team. We are excited for Anna as she takes on this important new role!

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Initiated

New feature will direct cell phone callers to the web

In an effort to direct more people online to enter a ticket instead of calling and talking directly with a Damage Prevention Specialist, Virginia811 will soon be initiating a new feature within the Interactive Voice Response system, or IVR. This new feature will allow the caller to opt out of a phone call and receive a text message that will provide them with a direct link to our website – essentially giving them the capability of “doing it themselves.”

This is how it works. When someone dials 811 from a cell phone, they will be asked a series of questions through an automated system. If the caller wants to place a single address ticket, update or remark a current ticket, or cancel a ticket, the IVR will then determine if the caller is using a cell phone. If so, they will be asked if they would like to receive a text message with a link to quickly enter their information online. If the caller agrees, the IVR sends a link to that cell phone number. The caller can then simply click the link and the application launched will provide them with the means to enter the information needed to fill out a ticket immediately and avoid waiting to speak to an agent.

This capability will provide much quicker service to stakeholders and is scheduled to be in place before November. It's just part of what the future will bring as Virginia811 moves toward digital transformation!



Celebrating Years of Service

These team members are celebrating work anniversaries this Quarter.

We are so thankful for our team members and their faithful service to Virginia811. Every person at Virginia811 has unique skills and talents that helps us do what we do every day – protect property and lives. Without our team members, we couldn't do what we do and we appreciate all for their passion to serve and their dedication to safety. We are extremely proud of what they have been able to accomplish in their time with us, so we are celebrating their work anniversaries this Quarter.

One of our longest standing employees is Debbie Hofbauer, who has been with the company since July of 2001. Thank you, Deb, for over 19 years of service! Not far behind Debbie is Marty Mitchem, who joined the team in July of 2002 and has been passionately serving for over 18 years! Another long-standing employee to note is Garry Finley. Garry came onboard with us in September of 2004 and has been dedicated to safety and a model employee for almost 16 years!

Here are other team members who are celebrating anniversaries this Quarter. They are:



All combined our 3rd Quarter Anniversary employees bring 73 years of experience to the Virginia811 team!!! We are so thankful for our employees and their faithful service and all that they have been able to accomplish in their time here!

Special Virginia811 Girl Scout Patch Created Virtual meeting was held to teach the girls how to earn the patch

In a continued mission to educate the public on the importance of safe digging, Virginia811 recently decided to create a Girl Scout patch that would get young girls excited about learning about Virginia811 and the importance of protecting underground utilities. Regional External Training and Marketing Liaison, Nikki Turpin (pictured below), works with The Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast Council (GSCCC) in the eastern region of our state and helped organize the special design of the patch. The GSCCC serves 11,000 girls in the Southeastern Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina region. The patch is specific to Virginia811 and encourages the girls to go through three pillars – to discover, connect, and take action with damage prevention in the state of Virginia.

Since COVID restrictions have prevented the Girl Scouts from gathering for their regularly scheduled meetings, the GSCCC reverted to virtual programming and the Girl Scouts and Virginia811 instead held a Zoom meeting to introduce the girls to Virginia811 and the patch. A total of 94 girls participated in the meeting during National Safe Digging month. During the meeting, the girls were able to complete the first pillar – the discover portion of the patch - and then were encouraged to complete the other pillars on their own. A contest was held for those who were able to complete all three pillars. Several of the girls completed the task and took pictures to share their accomplishment on social media. To see pictures from the contest, search Facebook using the hashtag #VA811GSCCC.



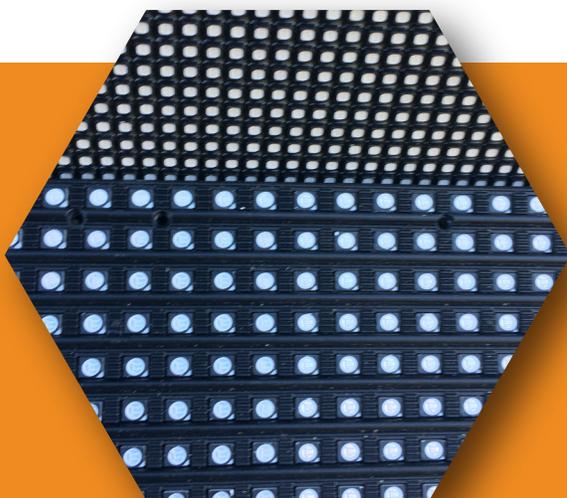
Extreme Makeover Virginia811 Truck Edition

Display truck gets new upgrades

Houses aren't the only things that get extreme makeovers! The Virginia811 Display truck recently took a cross-country trip to get some significant upgrades.

Virginia811 was able to purchase the truck in 2015. It was funded primarily through a damage prevention grant issued by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), an agency that is part of the US Department of Transportation. The truck's impressive capabilities have had it in demand, and it has been involved in hundreds of events, from parades to distance runs to college football tailgating. Its size and audio generate attention and thus make it a great tool for promote damage prevention.

In early July, the truck was transported from Roanoke to Las Vegas. While there, it received upgrades which included a new Windows 10 computer and new programs. A more noticeable change was new video display panels. The original displays were 6 mm in size, while the new ones are 3 mm. This change brings significant benefits:



- The 3 screens (which are often deployed as one large screen) had a combined resolution of 380,000 pixels. The smaller displays mean that more can fit in the same area, and thus the resolution increased to 1,250,000 pixels. The result – a much crisper, more brilliant image (as seen in the comparison photo above).

- Because the 3 mm displays are smaller, they are more energy-efficient than the original ones. How much so? The original units used 18 kw of power, but the new ones will use 8 kw.

- This allowed for the upgrade to a newer, smaller generator (bottom photo). While the old generator was a 20 kw unit, the new one is only 14 kw. So it takes up less space on the back of the truck than before, and because the load usage is lower, the generator will work more efficiently and use less power at the same time.

- The new displays also brought a new wiring system, one which will make troubleshooting and repairs much easier and more time-efficient.



Virginia811 is researching replacement of the speakers on the truck to complete the “extreme makeover.” Look for the truck at an event near you soon!