



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ROANOKE, VA (May 15, 2024): Virginia 811 will host a virtual webinar panel discussion titled 'Beyond the Binary: Charting an Interdisciplinary Futuristic Path for Virginia 811' on Friday, May 24, at 9:00 a.m. ET. B. Scott Crawford, President & CEO of Virginia 811, will moderate the panel featuring scholars from Virginia Tech and Radford University, spanning disciplines such as English, philosophy, statistics, and humanities. This panel webinar is open to the public and will focus on fostering discussions on AI, technology, and humanity to inspire innovative thinking and reinforce futuristic strategic business planning.

Crawford aims to assist Virginia 811, along with other businesses and organizations, in remaining relevant and adapting to unprecedented technological advances by exploring these concepts. Virginia 811 seeks to provide new insights and prepare for the future while inviting business leaders from the Roanoke Valley and across Virginia to participate. The organization emphasizes the importance of balancing emerging technologies with insights from the humanities for a well-rounded approach to business challenges and strategic planning.

"At Virginia 811, we fully embrace technology advancements, especially those related to AI," says Crawford. "However, we recognize the importance of maintaining a strong 'human element' in all our services. We are aware of the ethical questions and biases within AI, as well as the vital role empathy plays in creating a robust service environment. We want to examine these further through this panel discussion and invite others to join us."

Operating as a private LLC but governed entirely by Virginia law, including the Damage Prevention Act and regulated by the Virginia State Corporation Commission, Virginia 811 plays an integral role in safeguarding life, property, and Virginia's underground utility infrastructure. As the sole notification center in the state, Virginia 811 maintains uncompromising quality standards in its operations, ensuring accuracy and high quality in locate requests, its primary product.

Virginia 811 has increasingly leveraged technology, collaborating with Virginia Tech's Statistical Applications and Innovations Group (SAIG) to develop an AI model for auditing locate requests created through the web with 100% accuracy. This model has enabled Virginia 811 to identify over twice as many erroneous locate requests compared to previous audit practices, facilitating corrective actions on the same day.

Virginia 811 is also expanding its use of AI technology to enhance both internal and external services. They will soon introduce a custom Natural Language Generator (NLG) within their platform, PolicyTech, to streamline policy and procedure inquiries for internal users. Additionally, they are collaborating with Skapa Technologies to develop a Universal Ticket Management System (UTMS), utilizing AI to optimize excavation processes.

Recognizing the need to prepare for future challenges, Virginia 811 is eager to facilitate dialogue and strategic planning for the years ahead in the Roanoke Valley and beyond. This webinar will explore the evolving technological landscape and delve into ethical considerations surrounding AI integration.

Panelists:

Dr. Sylvester Johnson (Virginia Tech)

Assistant Vice Provost for Humanities
Executive Director for Tech for Humanity
Director for the Center for Humanities

Dr. Jen Van Mullekom (Virginia Tech)

Statistics Department
Director of the Statistical Applications and Innovations Group (SAIG)
Involved in creating and implementing an AI model for auditing locate requests at Virginia 811

Dr. Gil Hersch (Virginia Tech)

Philosophy Department
Core Professor with the Kellogg Center for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

Dr. Laurie Cubbison (Radford University)

English Department
Specializes in teaching a course focused on the intersection of AI in Literature and Film

This webinar panel discussion is free to attend, and registration is now open. Interested participants can register to receive a Zoom link for the discussion here: [\[LINK\]](#)

About Virginia 811:

Virginia 811 is a not-for-profit organization created by Virginia's utilities to protect their underground facilities. Virginia 811 is dedicated to preventing damage to underground utilities and promoting safety in excavation. They provide a vital service by facilitating the communication between excavators and locators. Virginia 811 operates a 24/7 contact center, receives locate requests, and dispatches notifications to utility operators across the state.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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