



The Virginia 811 Dirt

WORKING AS ONE TO GET THE JOB DONE



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On the Cover: Virginia 811 Liaison Fernando Mendez leads a hands-on location training series with The Caton Companies during their Safety Week in Charlottesville, VA, focusing on hand-digging techniques and best practices.



LETTER FROM THE CEO

B. Scott Crawford

This is the last newsletter before Virginia 811’s conversion to Irth’s Exactix platform! It is hard to believe we are on the eve of this conversion – a conversion that will bring enhancements to almost every part of operations, from locate request entry, to member relationship management, to billing. This is the culmination of years’ worth of discussion and work. We are all very excited to navigate and bring about this important continuous improvement effort and overall evolution toward a digital-based, truly 21st century notification.

As of this writing, June 26 remains to be Conversion Day! While it is always possible last minute items may cause a delay by a few days, at most a few weeks, it is increasingly looking as if we are on target for the June 26 conversion. It is imperative that all stakeholders remain connected to Virginia 811 in order to ensure there are no interruptions to operations at any level.

In addition to email campaigns, Virginia 811 team members have been sharing information and updates about the conversion at all stakeholder meetings. Virginia 811 has already begun to conduct web user training, and a host of other training and informational content has been created related to member mapping and member services. Locators should feel comfortable that locate request delivery will mimic the current process, meaning this conversion should be fairly straightforward for delivery and receiving locate requests; however, all contract locate companies and internal member locate departments need to follow this conversion closely and reach out to Virginia 811 if they would like to test delivery prior to launch to ensure there are no interruptions to locates.

One of the more important resources all stakeholders need to be engaging and watching closely is Virginia 811’s Exactix Resource Hub, found here: <https://va811.com/exactix-resource-hub/>. Through this hub, stakeholders will find a wealth of conversion-related content and information. Information about training – including recordings of previous training sessions – and an informative FAQ. This site will continuously be updated, so make this a favorite page and check back often. Training sessions have already allowed stakeholders to ask questions, with some being unforeseen and then added to the FAQ through the Hub. Questions are welcomed – and needed – so please, contact Virginia 811 through the Help Desk, found here: <https://va811.com/help-desk/>, and advance any questions you have about this conversion.

While there are so many team members at Virginia 811 playing important roles in this conversion, I do want to recognize several who are at the center and devoting energy and time, above and beyond, to make this conversion successful. Specifically, we need applaud the efforts of Rob Hogan, Shana Linthicum, Kari Harris, Kenny Spade, Diana Stokes, Marcy Carroll, Marty Mitchem, Anna Holtz, Amanda Cottrell, Frank Giannini, and Kim Swope. These individuals, along with their teams, have been instrumental in moving this project forward and toward success. And of course, we should all express a huge thank you to Virginia 811’s Damage Prevention Specialists – those processing locate requests over the phone, having to not only provide exceptional service as call volume is increasing but learn a new locate request entry platform!

Finally, a huge thank you needs to be extended from Virginia 811 to all its stakeholders. The engagement level you have demonstrated thus far is admirable and a reflection of the commitment this industry has to the protection of life, property, and the integrity of Virginia’s underground utility infrastructure. Thank you for all you have done to support this initiative – and thank you for the continued input you will provide and engagement level you will demonstrate as we, collectively as a team, launch a conversion that will result in positive improvements for damage prevention in our commonwealth!

Thank you all,

B. Scott Crawford
President & CEO
Virginia 811



Lessons from an 80's Girl Band:

When Seasons Change Not Only In Love But In Business

I will be the first to admit it. I was a sappy kid whose sappiness carried over to my young adult years. I remember in 1987 when a beautiful ballad by a Miami girl band titled "Seasons Change" was released. Embarrassingly, yes, I remember driving and singing to the lyrics thinking about some young lady I let slip away. The song, at the time, reminded me that "time just runs away" and "seasons change, people change." Relationships, in short, change, sometimes ending, sometimes evolving. Change, at some level, is central to love – it is an undeniable force that will make or break relationships.

Today, in the midst of a major center software conversion, I cannot help but think that business is much like love. As love changes so too does business. Businesses simply must recognize that "time just runs away" and "seasons change, people change" forcing businesses to embrace change to remain relevant. As anyone paying attention to business today, no matter what sector, the Digital and Communication Revolution that unfolded in the 1990s and early 2000s, sparking a general technological revolution that continues to impact businesses today, changes are unfolding, at times, faster than businesses can keep pace!

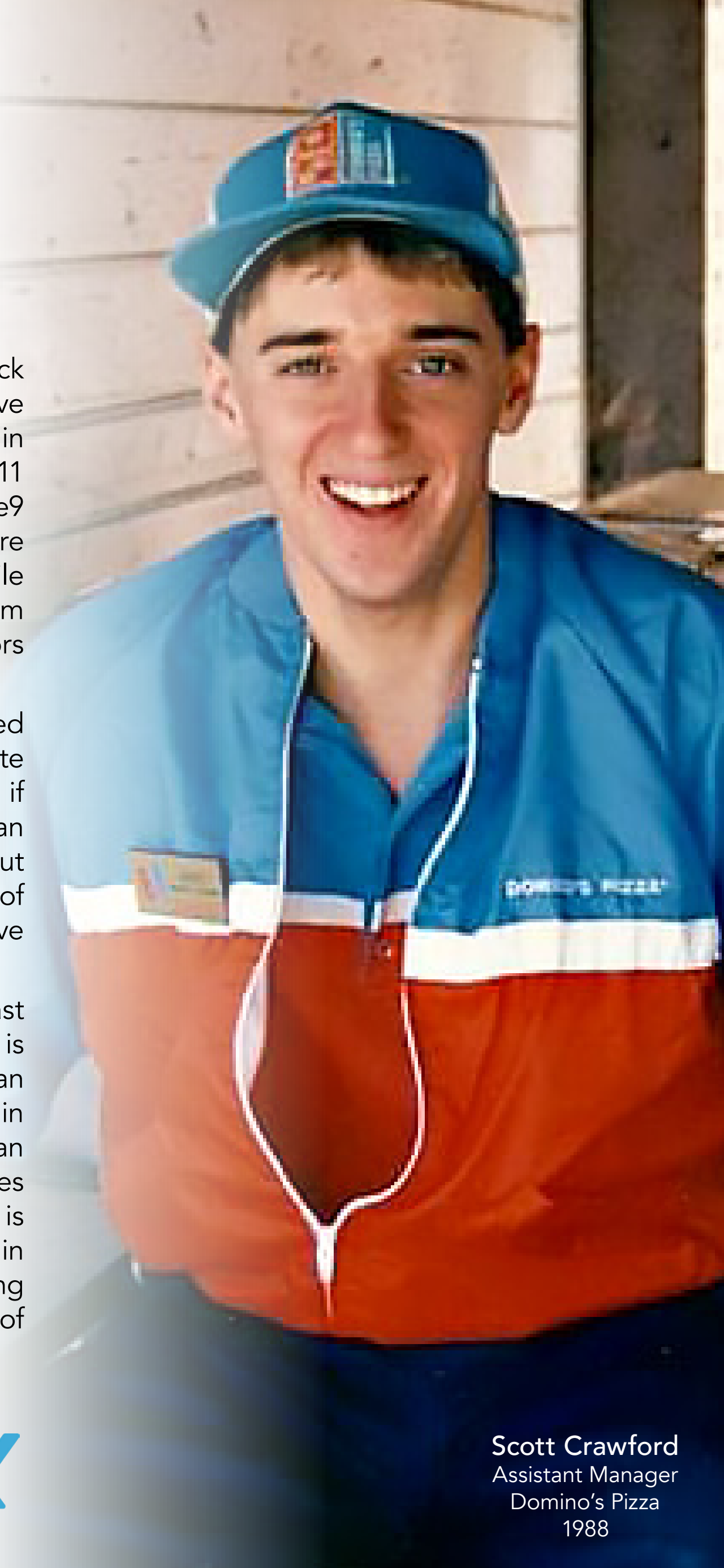
Virginia 811 has not been immune to this change, and it has embraced it. In January 2020, Virginia 811 was a predominantly brick and mortar operation, was on an Avaya call switch, was an owner and customer of Norfield Development Partners, and was only beginning to explore how artificial intelligence could be leveraged within its operational framework. Embracing the values of service, safety, innovation, and recognizing the impact digitization was having on both business and culture, Virginia 811 embarked on a journey. This journey has resulted in numerous changes, allowing for an evolution toward a digital notification center aligned with the changes unfolding in the broader market within which Virginia 811 operates.

Today, Virginia 811 has moved to Five9 for its call switch. Five9 is an incredibly efficient tool to help facilitate called-in locate requests. It also contains some advanced, AI driven, technologies that are being examined for future implementation. The pandemic

helped push Virginia 811 into the 21st century as it led to a conversion from a brick and mortar operational model to a virtual model. This in turn led to some positive changes to help mitigate the risk of Virginia 811 not being available to excavators in need of locate requests. The implementation of Office@Hand allows Virginia 811 Damage Prevention Specialists (DPS) to remain available for calls if, by chance, Five9 has a system failure (note, Five9 is called Five9 due to its 99.999% resiliency). There are a core group of Virginia 811 team members who have access to FirstNet mobile phones, allowing them to remain functional if disasters or emergencies overwhelm the Internet and cell service. A group of DPS have been provided home generators to ensure they can continue to process locate requests if there is a power outage.

As for AI, not only has Virginia 811 leveraged AI to audit, at 100%, web user entered locate requests, it has also launched Locate Assist. Locate Assist analyzes locate request volume and notifies excavators, the day a locate request is submitted, if the specific area is witnessing a high volume of locate requests. The excavator can then, if he or she chooses, schedule the locate request up to 12 business days out to increase the probability of not having a no show. Virginia 811's implementation of AI is only scratching the surface of future changes involving the use of AI to improve service and enhance safety.

This is but a short list of changes that have occurred at Virginia 811 over the past roughly five years. Of course, the movement from NDP to Irth's Exactix platform is an incredibly large change – possibly the largest change since Virginia 811 began operations in summer 2002. While change is hard, as Exposé beautifully expresses in "Seasons Change," it is not a given it is always going to result in a sad ballad – it can just as easily result in jubilation. At its base, continuous improvement necessitates change, and Virginia 811 is committed to finding evolution, not heartache. This is not to suggest there will not be some who miss older ways of "doing things," but in the current technological climate, with so many emerging technologies becoming available to improve service and safety, we must all be open to change – the spirit of continuous improvement demands it.



Office@Hand



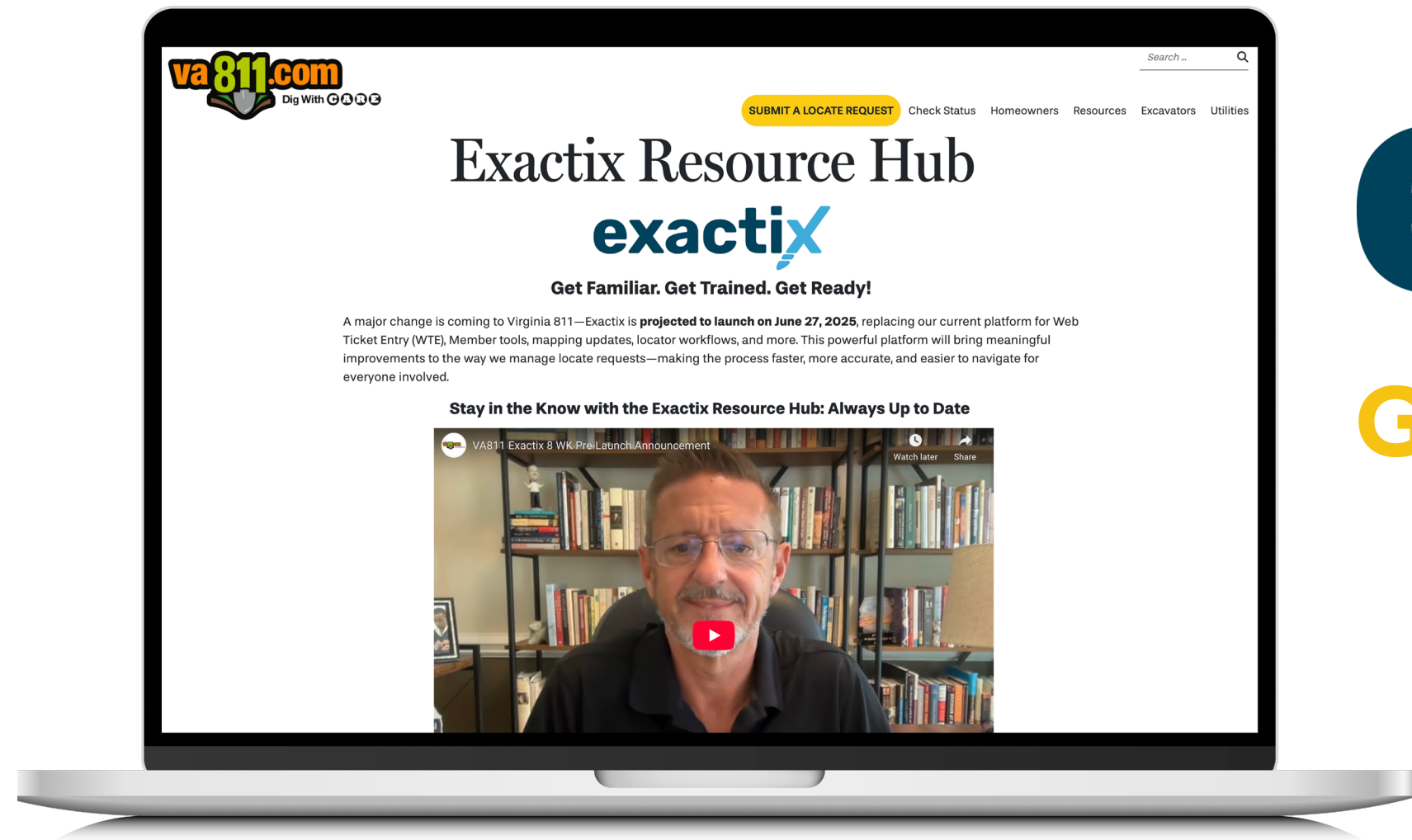
FIRSTNET
Built with AT&T



Locate
Assist

exactix

Scott Crawford
Assistant Manager
Domino's Pizza
1988



exactix Conversion Update

Get Familiar.
Get Trained.
Get Ready!

A major change is coming to Virginia 811—Exactix is projected to launch on **June 27, 2025**, replacing our current platform for Web Ticket Entry (WTE), Member tools, mapping updates, locator workflows, and more. This powerful platform will bring meaningful improvements to the way we manage locate requests—making the process faster, more accurate, and easier to navigate for everyone involved.

Who Will Be Impacted by the Exactix Conversion?

This upgrade affects everyone who uses the Virginia 811 system, making it essential to stay informed.

The transition to Exactix will impact many of your routine interactions with Virginia 811, including:

- Web Ticket Entry (WTE)
- Member Management and Mapping Updates
- Locator Functions and Delivery of Positive Responses

No matter your role, these changes will affect how you work with Virginia 811 — preparation is key.

Why Exactix?

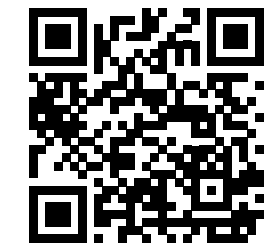
Trusted by 811 centers and damage prevention professionals nationwide, Exactix is a modern, web-based system designed to streamline locate requests while enhancing transparency and communication between excavators, utility operators, and contact centers. With its proven reliability and user-friendly design, Exactix has become the go-to solution for many in the industry.

The move to Exactix marks a big step forward for Virginia 811 and our stakeholders.
Thank you for being a part of this transition—together, we'll make it a success.

Exactix Resource Hub: Your Go-To Conversion Resource

To help you stay informed and ready, we've created the Virginia 811 Exactix Resource Hub—your central source for everything related to the software transition. It's updated regularly and includes:

- Virginia 811 Exactix FAQs
- What's New in Exactix WTE
- Onboarding & Training Resources
- Live Demo Schedules (Weekly in June!)
- Recorded Training Sessions
- New Account Setup Instructions
- Member Services & Mapping Support



Visit [VA811.com/Exactix-Resource-Hub/](https://va811.com/Exactix-Resource-Hub/) to get started or scan the QR code.

Check back often for the latest resources, announcements, and tips to support your transition to Exactix.

Exactix Training Opportunities

EXACTIX LOCATE REQUEST MANAGEMENT TRAINING

presented by Virginia 811 Member Services

Exactix Locate Request Management training is designed for Member contacts. It covers platform tools like ticket management, positive response, how to manage accounts and contacts, reports, and more. There will be an open Q&A session – giving Members a clear understanding of what's changing and helping you feel more confident ahead of the transition.

Thursday
June 5, 2025
2:00 - 3:00 PM

Friday
June 13, 2025
9:00 - 10:00 AM

Friday
June 20, 2025
1:00 - 2:00 PM

UPCOMING LIVE EXACTIX DEMOS FOR CURRENT WTE USERS

Thursday
June 5, 2025
2:00 - 3:00 PM

Thursday
June 12, 2025
2:00 - 3:00 PM

Friday
June 20, 2025
2:00 - 3:00 PM



To learn more about these trainings, visit [VA811.com/Events/](https://va811.com/Events/) or scan the QR code.

Operations Team Update: Gearing Up for Change

Preparing for Exactix, Training Rollout, and New Team Members

Over the past few months, the Operations Team has been hard at work preparing for two major initiatives: the transition to Exactix software and the rollout of our training program. The team has been actively participating in planning meetings, system demos, and training sessions to ensure we fully understand the new platform and its capabilities. Alongside this, we’ve been developing customized training materials designed to support our internal users through every step of the transition.

In addition to these preparations, we’ve also been focused on onboarding and training our newest team members who joined Virginia 811 on April 7, 2025. Please join us in welcoming Katie Bittinger, Kate Austin, Ashley Holloway, and Chris Cerillo to the team! We’re excited to have them on board and look forward to the contributions they’ll bring to our continued success.



Katie Bittinger



Kate Austin



Ashley Holloway



Chris Cerillo



Diana Stokes

We know change can be challenging, but our goal is to make it as smooth and straightforward as possible. Your feedback and participation throughout this process are invaluable, and we’re excited to deliver tools that will streamline our workflows and enhance service delivery across the board.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement—stay tuned for more updates and training opportunities in the weeks ahead!

- Diana Stokes, Manager of Operations



Transmission Fee Adjustment Takes Effect July 1, 2025

As part of the phased approach previously shared with stakeholders, the \$0.05 increase to Virginia 811’s per-transmission fee will go into effect on July 1, 2025, bringing the total fee to \$1.20.

This adjustment, approved by the Virginia 811 Board of Directors, follows earlier increases in 2023 and 2024. The decision supports our continued ability to invest in essential services, attract skilled talent, and enhance technology that benefits all Members.

Virginia 811 remains committed to keeping costs as low as possible while ensuring the quality and reliability of the services you depend on. We sincerely appreciate your continued partnership and support.

Important Billing System Update

As part of our upcoming software conversion, members will notice some changes to our billing process.

In June, you will receive two invoices: one from our current system and one reflecting the days billed in our new system. Invoices will still be delivered via email as usual. However, with the new system, the detailed report typically attached will not be included. We are currently working to provide instructions on how to access this information within the new system and will share those steps as soon as they are available.



CHANNEL	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
PHONE	171,048	26.26%
WTE	260,706	40.03%
SAT	114,590	17.59%
TRE	104,743	16.08%
API	254	0.04%

TOTAL: 651,341

Total Internet Originated Tickets YTD 2025

480,293

(73.74% of all tickets)

Broadband Support Specialists: Connecting Virginia's Future

How Virginia 811 is Supporting Rural Fiber Expansion and Strengthening the 811 Process Through BEAD-Funded Positions

- B. Scott Crawford

Virginia has seen heavy excavation over the past five years. The pandemic, followed by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the federal support for rural broadband expansion, as well as replacement of lead water pipes and the modernization of municipally owned gas distribution pipes, has resulted in three record years between 2020 and 2024 in relation to locate request volume coming through the commonwealth's notification center, Virginia 811. Not surprisingly, Virginia has seen record years in locator no-shows, Three Hour Notices, and multiple Three Hour Notices. The pressure on the entire 811 process has been real. Not only did increased locate requests bombard the system but locate requests increasingly became focused on rural areas, which exacerbated the impact of the overall increase in the demand for underground utility locates.

While Virginia 811 cannot control locate request volume, it can identify a means to provide stakeholders to work through these challenges. In the spirit of service and support, Virginia 811 advanced a proposal to receive Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program funding. Virginia 811 has received funding to create, and maintain, for three years, two Broadband Support Specialists. These positions have now been filled and the two individuals, Anita Scott and Roy Lax, have hit the ground running!

They have already begun contacting Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) funded fiber companies and excavators. Through their efforts, they will be ensuring locate request accuracy for broadband projects by collaborating with Virginia 811's Web Ticket Quality Coordinators and Operations Supervisors to review quality concerns and to verify scope of work on Update requests. They will be available to support fiber excavators to provide a better understanding of best practices and the Virginia Damage Prevention Act. They will also be working with telecoms receiving VATI funding to understand their projects scheduled six months in advance to then work with affected members to better prepare for the increase in locate requests.

The above is not a complete list of how these Broadband Support Specialists will assist stakeholders involved in VATI funded projects, but it definitely hits some highlights. They will be making appearances at Local Damage Prevention Committee (LDPC) meetings and public Advisory Committee meetings to provide updates on their efforts and make themselves available for those needing support.



Anita Scott
BroadbandSupport@VA811.com
540.556.6834



Roy Lax
BroadbandSupport@VA811.com
540.556.6748

Connect With Our Virginia 811 Broadband Support Specialists


If you're involved in a VATI-funded broadband project, Anita and Roy are available to assist. They can help ensure locate requests are accurate, clarify best practices, and provide guidance on the Virginia Damage Prevention Act.

They're here to help and look forward to working with you!



Recognizing Excellence

The Virginia 811 Golden Shovel Award



ALICE MILLER
Golden Shovel Award 1st Quarter 2025

Virginia 811 is proud to recognize Alice Miller, Senior Damage Prevention Specialist – Stakeholder Support, as the 1st Quarter 2025 Golden Shovel Award recipient. Alice has been with Virginia 811 for 23 years and continues to make a lasting impact through her experience, teamwork, and commitment to our mission.

This award honors team members who make a significant and positive contribution to the organization each quarter. Alice consistently goes above and beyond, stepping in to assist with alarms and alerts when teammates are tied up, and serving as a dependable resource to the Member Services team.

Her support extends beyond day-to-day tasks. As a mentor, Alice offers guidance and encouragement to new team members, helping them grow in their roles with patience and insight. Her ability to explain complex situations, share helpful examples, and offer simple encouragement - like "great job" or "have a great day" - makes her a valued presence.

“ When I first started at Virginia 811, Alice was my mentor and cheerleader. She understood that we all learn differently and made sure my experience was a positive one. On tough days, she encouraged me, shared helpful tips, and let me listen to her calls to improve my flow. That support made a big difference - and she still offers it today. ”


Thank you for your 23 years of dedication.
CONGRATULATIONS ALICE!



Team Members Celebrating Their Service to Virginia 811 This Quarter

Marcy Carroll 4/8/2002 23 Years of Service	Lori Saunders 6/3/2002 23 Years of Service	Victoria Brown 5/15/2023 2 Years of Service
Dina Kimball 4/15/2002 23 Years of Service	Marcia Hill 6/10/2002 23 Years of Service	Cindy Lamm 5/15/2023 2 Years of Service
Dorothy Smith 4/15/2002 23 Years of Service	Missy Montaigne 5/27/2003 22 Years of Service	Tim Poole 5/15/2023 2 Years of Service
Cookie Rader 4/22/2002 23 Years of Service	Lisa Davis 6/29/2015 10 Years of Service	Stafany Abbott 5/13/2024 1 Year of Service
Diana Stokes 4/22/2002 23 Years of Service	Maya Lane 6/29/2015 10 Years of Service	Kayla Adkins 5/13/2024 1 Year of Service
Heather Minnix 5/13/2002 23 Years of Service	Nicole Hodges 4/26/2021 4 Years of Service	Brian Boyd 5/13/2024 1 Year of Service
Kari Harris 5/20/2002 23 Years of Service	Meredith Diedrich 4/25/2022 3 Years of Service	Nicole Mattingly 5/13/2024 1 Year of Service
Alice Miller 5/20/2002 23 Years of Service	Neva Zeedyk 4/25/2022 3 Years of Service	
Brenda Matheny 6/3/2002 23 Years of Service	Eric Aldridge 5/15/2023 2 Years of Service	

317 Years of Combined Virginia 811 Experience
THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE

VUSC

VIRGINIA UTILITY SAFETY CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 28-30
Virginia Beach, VA

A New Chapter in Utility Safety: Join Us in Virginia Beach This October

This fall marks an exciting evolution for Virginia’s utility safety community. The Damage Prevention Conference and the Pipeline Safety Conference, two cornerstone events in the industry, are coming together in a new, expanded format: **The 2025 Virginia Utility Safety Conference**.

Hosted by Virginia 811 in partnership with the Division of Utility and Railroad Safety of the State Corporation Commission, this combined event will bring together industry professionals, partners, and experts from across Virginia for expanded discussions, training sessions, and networking opportunities focused on damage prevention, utility and pipeline safety, and regulatory compliance.

Whether you’re new to the industry or a seasoned leader, this conference is built to provide actionable insights, strengthen your safety culture, and keep you up to date on the latest regulatory and operational trends.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expanded Sessions

Covering topics in utility safety, pipeline regulations, damage prevention best practices, and industry innovation.

Networking Opportunities

Connect with peers, industry leaders, and regulatory partners during daily sessions and evening receptions.

Training & Break-Out Sessions

Practical, in-depth sessions designed to equip professionals at all levels with tools to improve safety outcomes.

Vendor Expo

Explore products, services, and technology solutions from across the industry.

ATTENDEE AND VENDOR REGISTRATION


View attendee registration, hotel block rates, and vendor and sponsorship opportunity details here:

<https://va811.com/2025-safety-conference/>



We look forward to seeing you there!


VUSC presented in partnership with:

KEYNOTE SPEAKER




Ambassador “Sully” Sullenberger
A Legendary Voice on Leadership and Resilience





Upcoming Virginia Pipeline Awareness Meetings




CoRE-EX and Excavator Programs

Hosted by local pipeline and gas distribution companies, these programs address critical damage prevention initiatives specific to excavators. Investing time in either training is the best way to learn current safe digging practices.

VIRGINIA BEACH September 8, 2025 5:30 PM	MANASSAS September 18, 2025 11:00 AM	SOUTH BOSTON October 2, 2025 5:30 PM	LEBANON October 15, 2025 5:30 PM
SMITHFIELD September 8, 2025 11:00 AM	CULPEPER September 23, 2025 5:30 PM	MARTINSVILLE October 7, 2025 5:30 PM	ABINGDON October 16, 2025 7:30 AM
EMPORIA September 10, 2025 11:00 AM	RUCKERSVILLE September 24, 2025 5:30 PM	ROANOKE October 8, 2025 11:00 AM	ABINGDON October 16, 2025 5:30 PM
COLONIAL HEIGHTS September 15, 2025 5:30 PM	HARRISONBURG September 25, 2025 5:30 PM	BLACKSBURG October 9, 2025 7:30 AM	
SANDSTON September 16, 2025 11:00 AM	PALMYRA September 30, 2025 5:30 PM	BLACKSBURG October 9, 2025 5:30 PM	
FREDERICKSBURG September 17, 2025 11:00 AM	LYNCHBURG October 1, 2025 5:30 PM	NORTON October 14, 2025 5:30 PM	

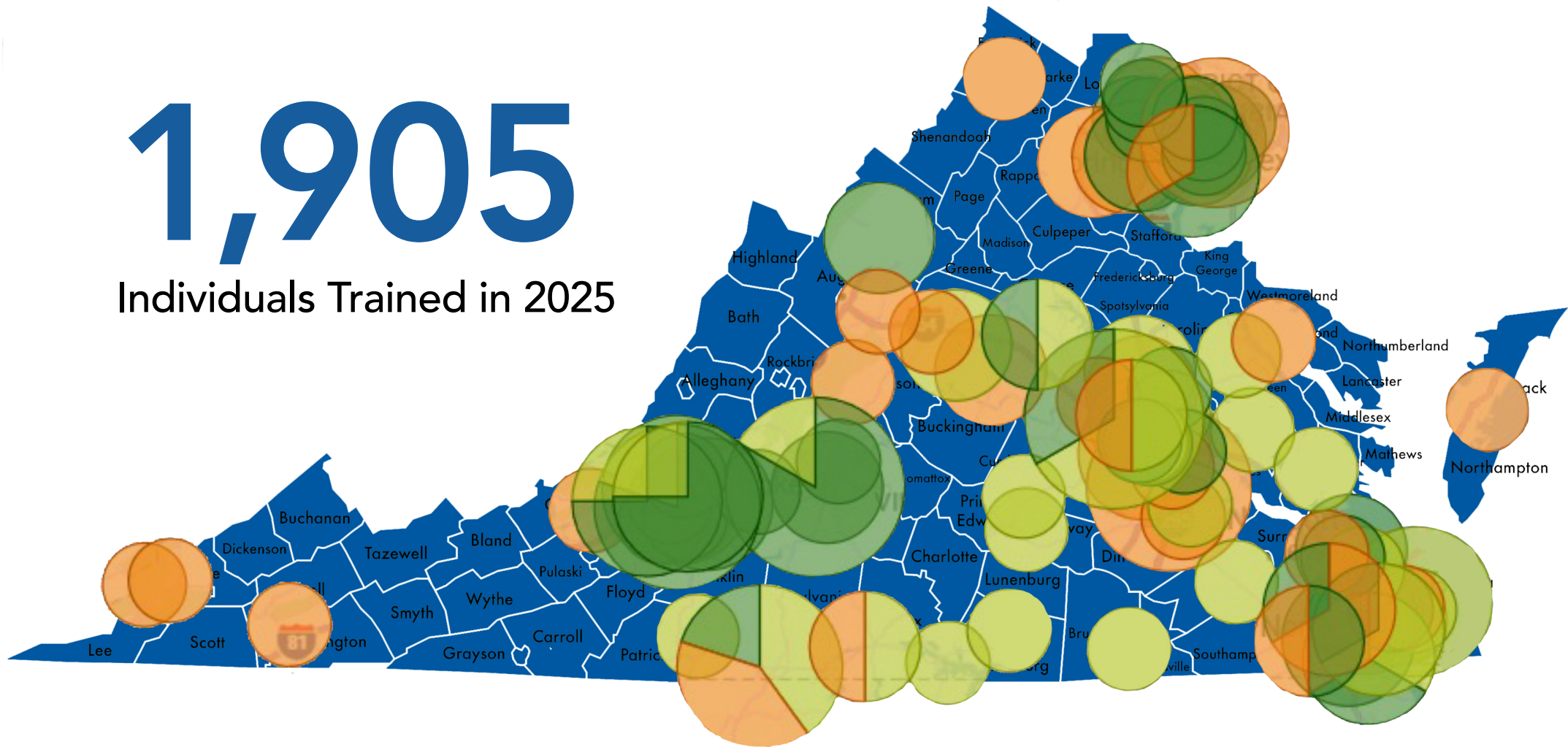
For registration details and general information, please visit: [VA811.com/events](https://va811.com/events)

Virginia 811 | 108 N Jefferson St. Suite 312 | Roanoke VA 24016 | 811 or 1.800.552.7001

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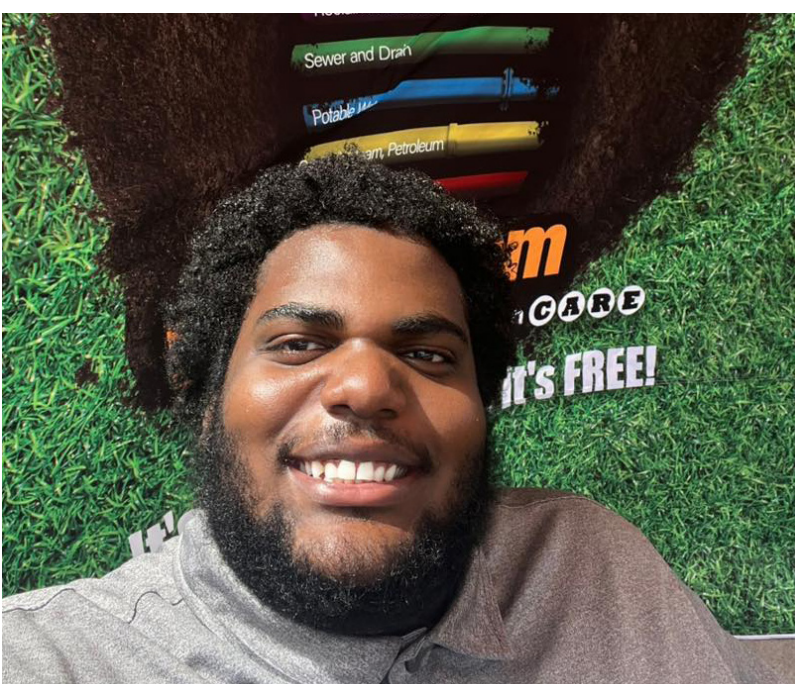
2025 Virginia 811 External Training

Public Awareness (PAT), Web Ticket Entry (WTE), & Member Services Team Efforts



1,905
Individuals Trained in 2025

The map below presents a comprehensive heat map analysis of the PAT team’s activities throughout 2025, highlighting the breadth of training and marketing events attended. These engagements encompass a wide range of formats, including sponsorships and display table events, showcasing the team’s outreach efforts.





Virginia 811's Display Truck Hits the Road Brighter, Louder, and Smarter Than Ever—Fresh Off a Major Upgrade in Las Vegas.

The Virginia 811 Display Truck has been rolling strong in 2025, making 47 impactful appearances across the Commonwealth so far. As we plan out the rest of the year, we're focusing on events that make the biggest impact by targeting high-damage areas, maximizing public visibility, and staying cost-effective.

This truck isn't just a showpiece—it's one of our most important tools for public education and branding. Whether it's turning heads at a community event or delivering the safe digging message in a high-traffic zone, it plays a key role in how we connect with Virginians.

After nearly ten years on the road, our traveling workhorse was starting to show some wear. The once-bright LED screen had faded, and the extended "Billboard" mode was showing signs of metal fatigue. So, we hit the reset button and sent it back to FTL Displays in Las Vegas - the original builders from 2015 - for a much-needed high-tech refresh.

We're excited to share that the truck is now outfitted with a brand-new 5th generation LED system, packed with the latest in outdoor display and communication technology. This upgrade takes our public engagement game to the next level, ensuring Virginia 811 continues to stand out—and stay relevant—in today's fast-paced digital world.



Faster Refresh Rate & Enhanced Brightness

The new LED panels deliver richer colors, smoother motion, and outstanding clarity - even in full sunlight.



Improved Fold-Out Screen Design

A more seamless and flatter viewing surface creates a polished, professional appearance at events.



Wireless Audio Integration

Bluetooth audio and a remote microphone system provide clear, synchronized messaging without the wires.



5G + Onboard Wi-Fi Connectivity

Full wireless control allows for remote access, quick setup, and real-time content management. (5G available in supported areas)



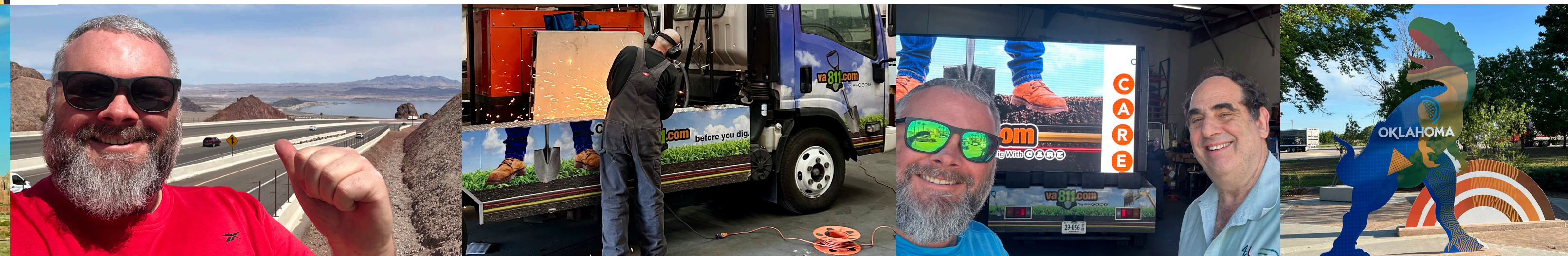
Live Streaming Capabilities

Community outreach and safety campaigns can now be broadcast in real time directly to the display.

Tim Poole, our dedicated display truck driver, drove the truck 2,473 miles east back to Virginia, traveling through eight states, capturing interest, and sharing the 811 message from state to state.

"It was an amazing trip across the country," Tim shared. "What I'm most excited about is showcasing the display truck's new screen to the public and to excavators here in Virginia. The brightness and picture quality of these 5th generation LED boards are second to none."

With these upgrades, the Virginia 811 Display Truck is ready for the road ahead—continuing to support our mission of damage prevention through outreach, education, and innovation.



Three Strategies to Reduce Excavations Taking Place Without 811 Notification

- By ChatGPT

The following essay was entirely written by ChatGPT+, an AI Natural Language Generator available through Open AI. The prompt to which ChatGPT+ responded was *"What are the top three strategies to successfully reduce the number of excavations occurring without using 811's services?"*

Despite decades of public education and outreach, a concerning number of excavations across the country still occur without contacting 811—a dangerous oversight that puts people, property, and vital underground infrastructure at risk. While damage prevention stakeholders have made great strides in promoting safe digging practices, closing the gap between awareness and action remains a top priority. To that end, three key strategies have proven especially effective in reducing the number of unnotified excavations: targeted education, strategic enforcement, and industry partnerships.

1 Targeted, Behavioral Education Campaigns

General awareness campaigns like "Call Before You Dig" have helped make 811 a nationally recognized brand. However, awareness alone does not always lead to behavioral change. Many violators know about 811 but still choose not to use it due to perceived delays, mistrust in the system, or a belief that "it won't happen to me." The solution lies in targeted, behavior-informed outreach that focuses on high-risk groups—such as fence builders, landscapers, and rural contractors—using language and channels that resonate with their daily realities.

Educational campaigns should go beyond compliance messages and highlight real-world consequences, such as injuries, lawsuits, or costly utility repairs. Personal stories and localized data can add impact. Additionally, training programs in high schools, trade schools, and licensing processes ensure that the next generation of workers is instilled with a culture of safety from the outset.

2 Strategic Enforcement and Accountability

Education works best when paired with visible, consistent enforcement. States with clearly defined penalties for failure to notify 811—and the willingness to impose them—typically see lower rates of unnotified excavation. However, enforcement need not be purely punitive. The most successful programs also include constructive follow-ups: violators may be required to attend training sessions, participate in safety audits, or join damage prevention committees.

Further, encouraging reporting from utility members, locators, and even the public helps create a culture of accountability. Technologies that streamline the collection and analysis of 17a violations (excavations without notice) can provide regulators with the evidence needed to take meaningful action while also identifying geographic or industry trends that warrant focused intervention.

3 Building Stronger Partnerships Across the Industry

Reducing unauthorized excavation is not the responsibility of 811 centers alone. Equipment rental companies, local governments, professional licensing boards, and home improvement retailers can all play a role. For example, some states have formed partnerships with equipment rental outlets to display 811 signage and integrate a reminder into the rental process. Similarly, municipalities can require 811 compliance for permits, making it impossible to start a project without verification.

Industry associations and large contractors can also help set the tone by modeling best practices and making 811 notification a non-negotiable part of subcontractor agreements. When the industry collectively reinforces the standard, compliance becomes a cultural expectation rather than a legal burden.

Conclusion

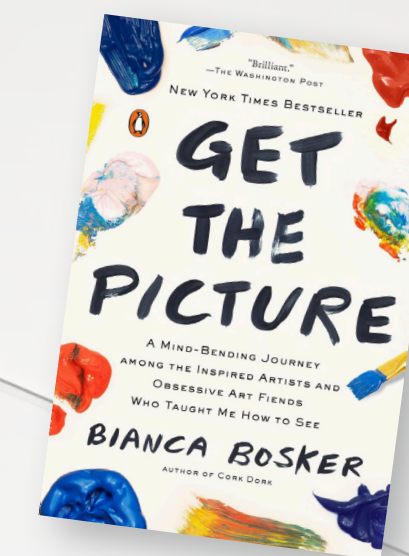
Reducing unnotified excavations is a complex challenge—but one that can be met through targeted education, consistent enforcement, and collaborative partnerships. By aligning messaging, accountability, and industry norms, we can move closer to a future where using 811 is not just the law—it's the default.



Illustration Provided by ChatGPT+
Call Before you Dig, Image,
Digital Art, ChatGPT+ and B. Scott Crawford, 2024



LEARNING TO SEE



- B. Scott Crawford

Book Review of *Get the Picture: A Mind-Bending Journey Among the Inspired Artists and Obsessive Art Fiends Who Taught Me How to See* by Bianca Bosker

Bianca Bosker's work, *Get the Picture*, is an incredibly insightful journey into the experiences of a journalist intent on exploring the meaning of art. At some point, I would venture to guess, all of us have seen a work of "art" and stated in some manner: "how is this art? I could do that – heck, a 5 year old could do that!" Bosker is no exception, and she sets out on an engaging adventure to respond to this very thought.

In order to try to answer this question and confront a mindset that some art is so basic it really is not art, Bosker worked with curators, collectors, and artists. She immersed herself in the art world at every level, working in galleries and serving as an artist's assistant, even working as a security guard at the Guggenheim. She forced herself to attend gallery openings and attend after parties, getting to know those "in the know" about the art world. In a skeptical and inquisitive manner, Bosker chronicles her experiences in *Get the Picture*, leading the reader through a surprisingly engaging narrative that brings about some revelations about not just art and beauty, but about Truth.

Bosker does not center her analysis of art strictly on those in the industry. She provides the reader with science-based and neurological insights into sight and how we understand and interpret the world around us. For example, Bosker found that experts in a particular field approach art in a very different way than lay people, or non-experts. While experts focus on an entire composition of a work, attempting to understand the structure and composition in its entirety, non-experts tend to focus on details. Interestingly, "one study found that experts blinked less than naïve [non-expert] viewers while contemplating an abstract image." This study suggests that "experts" put forth more visual effort than non-experts. In short, experts tend to focus on context and the "big picture" while non-experts focus on details and embrace a gut reaction to determine the value they assign a work of art.

However, within this context, Bosker explores scientific studies examining sight in general and how we tend to not see "reality" but rather what we hallucinate! At its base, the world is simply data. Our senses allow us, through out

brains, to engage this data and interpret it. In regard to sight, Bosker advances the concept of a "filter of expectation," a term coined by the psychologist Rebecca Chamberlain. Sight is not infallible. Based on both human evolution and the basic shape of human eyes the brain is forced to interpret the data, or the reflection of light, collected by eyes and transmitted to it in a manner that is not necessarily aligned with Truth. All humans, for example, have two blind spots due to the shape of the eyes. Rather than us having to endure two black circles in our peripheral vision, the brain takes data surrounding these blind spots and "fills in the blanks." However, our general expectations of a particular environment may also create hallucinations, letting us see what may or may not actually be present. In regard to how this neurological process plays out, Bosker notes that "I was looking at a piece [of art] that an artist had painted. But my brain was creating the artwork, too – tossing out information before I'd even registered it, jumping to conclusions about what was where, overriding the data to give me a possible impression of the piece."

We in business must ask ourselves: if this is what our brains do as we engage art, how might our brains act in a similar manner as we engage visual, or even textual, representations of business-related data? Do we, as we look at data, whether that be damage data, survey data, or performance data, "hallucinate" at some level and "toss out" some information and "jump to conclusions"?

While related to an arguably non-business topic, "what is art?", *Get the Picture* is worth business leaders reading. Engagement with art is, ultimately, engagement with data. With data being used to, unfortunately, drive decisions, rather than driving questions and dialogue, it is important for business leaders to reflect on our relationship with data and how our brains may actually mislead us, through hallucination, and allow us to misinterpret data, resulting in, through this hallucination, to make, well, poor decisions. Just as we may miss appreciating an actually thoughtful and aesthetically pleasing work of art due to preconceived bias, we may miss important insights the data we engage is actually offering in relation to our business decisions.

