



# The Virginia 811 Dirt

WORKING AS ONE TO GET THE JOB DONE



VIRGINIA 811'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2025

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## LETTER FROM THE CEO

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### B. Scott Crawford

As 2025 comes to a close, stakeholders can agree it was yet another busy year. Locate requests for 2025 were roughly 1% below 2024, and 2024 was a record year. However, the highlight of 2025 was that within this busy environment on June 27, 2025, the notification center successfully migrated and company history was made as Virginia 811 launched its new Exactix center software solution! This move has allowed Virginia 811 to leverage the power of a robust platform in order to provide benefits for all stakeholders.

While any conversion comes with the threat of service interruption, for a project the size of this nature, such interruptions were minimal. Adding to the complexity of the conversion was that with the move to Exactix Virginia 811 was able to be tied to a much more digital-based, and cloud-based, operating environment. The move from “on-prem” to cloud-based simply added to the challenges of the conversion, but in the end, this has all left Virginia 811 more resilient. For example, on October 20, 2025, when Amazon Web Services’ East Coast servers suffered from a DNS issue and brought down “half of the Internet,” Virginia 811 was able to immediately direct locate request delivery away from AWS East Coast and use AWS West Coast servers; thus, there were no service interruptions. Being cloud-based allows Virginia 811 to now have redundancies crossing large regions in place to help ensure it remains operational.

The post-conversion period proved to present several opportunities for continuous improvement within the new operating environment. With the move to a much more modern account-based system, and the integration of measures to protect member and stakeholder data (essential in the digital age), stakeholders noticed less overall locate request visibility. Valid concerns led Virginia 811 to find solutions to allow general contractors and damage investigators to increase visibility, without threatening privacy. Similarly, Virginia 811 quickly recognized that some previous web-based locate request options did not cross over with the conversion. Virginia 811 worked with Exactix to restore several of these functions, and a continued post-conversion project will restore the remaining function related to the processing of single address locate requests – so stay tuned!

However, the conversion has not been the only project unfolding at Virginia 811. In December, Virginia 811 will unveil its new mobile education unit! This education platform will help the Public Awareness team engage and share the damage prevention message with children at schools and a host of public events. Along with this important education tool, Virginia 811 will be launching in January an Augmented Reality, gamified mobile application, available for both Apple and Android devices. This app, “Underline Quest,” will allow users of all ages to launch an AR driven experience where they must look at clues to determine what utility has been damaged, repair the damaged line, and determine the root cause. Underline Quest will prove to be an exciting and innovative way to help individuals understand – even visualize – the underground utility infrastructure we work so hard to protect!

2025 has been an exciting year – but with continued funding for rural broadband expansion, and the launch of Underline Quest, along with leveraging the Virginia 811 mobile education unit, the excitement is only going to continue!

B. Scott Crawford  
President & CEO  
Virginia 811



# THE IMPORTANCE OF READING IN DAMAGE PREVENTION

- B. Scott Crawford

As we, in the words of Charles Dickens, recognize we are all but "fellow passengers to the grave," collectively on a journey of life that for all of us has a definitive end, it is important that we all spend our time in a way that matters. I, for one, am proud to be working beside so many worthy fellow passengers spending so much of their time protecting Virginia's underground utility infrastructure and striving to prevent any passengers reaching a grave in an untimely manner!

Recently, by chance, I was looking through a digital version of a book with which I was not familiar. The book, *The Use of Life*, by Sir John Lubbock, published in 1894, provides the reader with a reflection on how we should best use the limited time in this world we are each provided. A quick review of the work reveals many hidden gems that are indirectly relevant to damage prevention. One line struck me as Lubbock notes "One of the greatest talismans in the Arabian Nights is the Magic Carpet, on which if a man sat, he was transported wherever he wished to be. Railways do this now for all of us, and 'as we increase the range of what we see, we increase the richness of what we can imagine.'"

This passage reinforces the need to take advantage of diverse experiences we can find as we play the role of "passengers to the grave." We must break free from "echo chambers" and the environments we find comfort and push ourselves to see the world in its many forms, engaging people with diverse backgrounds and visit places new and foreign to us. By living life in this manner, our imaginations will be engaged and grow – innovation will thrive!

However, elsewhere Lubbock reveals for us, inadvertently, a true "Magic Carpet" that is more metaphysical than the physical railroad. Lubbock relates how "when we read...we may transport ourselves to the mountains or the seashore, and visit the most beautiful parts of the earth, without fatigue, inconvenience, or expense." Books in essence become a "Magic Carpet" as they take us to new places, allow us to meet new people, and, importantly, get exposed to new ideas. Not just travel, but also through books we can "increase the range of what we see" and in turn "increase the richness of what we can imagine." And through imagination comes innovation, which drives continuous improvement, which subsequently brings gains in damage prevention as we apply new thinking to the many wicked problems we face.

The need to expand thinking in order to find innovation is a central point in *The Innovator's DNA*, by Jeff Dyer, et. al. Within the construct of innovative thought the authors advance, a key component relates to association – the ability to associate diverse ideas. As the author's note: "the more diverse our crossroads of experience, the more likely a serendipitous synthesis of the surprising will occur. Put simply, innovators intentionally maneuver themselves into the intersection, where diverse experiences flourish and foster the discovery of new insights." Associating this with Lubbock's observation, this "crossroads of experience" reinforces the ability to "increase the range of what we see," thus our imaginations grow, and innovation follows! Reading is a strong force to drive us to this magical crossroads.

Recently, I read a work related to Augmented Reality and business growth. The book, *The Next Dimension*, by Tom Emrich, is a non-damage prevention related work on how Augmented and Extended Realities can enhance success in business. Even though entirely unrelated to our industry, through association and through "increasing the range" of what I could see, a new Augmented Reality application tied to public awareness and education related to damage prevention began to emerge. Working with the specialized ChatGPT model the author created to augment content found within the book, this app took on a life of its own and will be launched in January 2026! This app, available on both ApplePhones and Droid, "Underline Quest," was born from innovation directly tied to . . . reading!

As we strive to reach 0 damages, innovation will be central to this noble effort and narrative. I cannot stress enough that all of us in this industry must strive to find innovative solutions to the numerous challenges we face. And those who read, and I mean read anything from philosophy, to history, to leadership books, to fiction, and everything in between, will definitely find a level of exploration that will spark the innovation we need – reading will serve as the Magic Carpet to expand our field of vision and in turn fuel our imaginations and our ability to innovate!

## *The Library*

Jacob Lawrence  
1960





# New Tools. Less Work.



See how Exactix's updated online features save time on every locate request.

Since transitioning to Exactix, Virginia 811 has continued to add features and resources to help streamline how locate requests are submitted and managed.

## Explore the Tools Now Available to All Users

### Online Updates, Re-marks, and Cancellations

Good news: these tools are now available online for all users. You can manage Updates, Re-marks, and Cancellations directly in Exactix—no more calling in or waiting on hold.

It's a simple way to keep your projects moving:

- Log in
- Make your change
- Get back to work

And if you don't have an Exactix account yet, getting set up takes just a couple of minutes. It's the easiest way to manage locate requests from start to finish.

### New 90-Second Training Video

A short instructional video is now available, showing how to set up an Exactix account and complete online Updates and Re-marks.

It's a quick option for anyone needing a brief walkthrough.

### Exactix WTE Training

Users who previously worked in Web Ticket Entry (WTE) and have not yet completed their Exactix WTE training are missing out on features that make your work faster and easier, including:

- Full Exactix mapping tools
- Support for multi-address or more complex projects
- Improved processing efficiency
- Reduced need for phone-based Updates

Completing this training ensures access to the full feature set.

### Helpful Exactix Guides Now Available

New step-by-step resources have been added to the Virginia 811 website:

- **Set Up Your Exactix Account** – A simple starting guide for new users.
- **Mobile Instructions** – Create a mobile-friendly Exactix view



For more details, visit:

[VA811.com/exactix-resource-hub/](https://va811.com/exactix-resource-hub/)





# Krysta Simpson Named 2025 Virginia 811 Damage Prevention Ambassador

Virginia 811 is proud to recognize **Krysta Simpson**, Water & Gas Compliance Coordinator at Danville Utilities, as the **2025 Damage Prevention Ambassador Award recipient**. This award honors individuals who actively promote safe excavation practices, reduce utility damages, and strengthen a culture of safety and education in their communities.

Krysta stood out for her strong involvement in damage prevention efforts, including her leadership as the Chairperson for the Southwest Virginia Region 1 Local Damage Prevention Committee, her participation in industry organizations, and her ongoing work to educate staff, contractors, and the public on safety and compliance.

In her role at Danville Utilities, Krysta oversees pipeline safety and environmental compliance, conducts job-site evaluations, audits safety performance, and works closely with department leadership to meet state, federal, and local requirements. She also delivers safety training through multiple channels — a key reason her impact extends well beyond her organization.

Krysta considers this award a major milestone in her career, noting that it validates the work she has put into proactive damage prevention and public awareness. She is motivated by continuous learning and hopes to take on increasingly complex projects that further strengthen safety communication and community outreach.

A Danville native with degrees from Liberty University, Krysta previously spent eight years in Social Services before moving into the utility field. That experience shaped much of her approach today — especially her focus on clear communication, community connection, and meeting people where they are.

Outside of work, Krysta gravitates toward projects that let her stay curious and hands-on, whether that’s restoring second-hand finds, exploring new places, or volunteering in her community. She brings that same energy for learning and trying new things into her professional life, which is part of what makes her so effective in the damage prevention space.

Please join us in congratulating Krysta Simpson!



# 811

## FAST FACTS

CHANNEL	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
PHONE	475,514	31.16%
WEB	1,050,366	68.84%

Total YTD 2025  
**1,525,880**

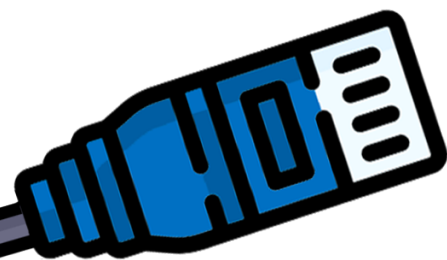


Krysta Simpson  
Water & Gas  
Compliance Coordinator



# Supporting Virginia's Broadband Buildout

## An Update on Virginia 811's Broadband Support Efforts



As broadband expansion accelerates across Virginia, Broadband Support Specialists **Anita Scott** and **Roy Lax** are helping stakeholders manage the increased locate activity tied to fiber construction. Through our partnership with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, they focus on improving communication, strengthening project coordination, and preparing operators, locators, and excavators for large-scale broadband work.

### PREPARING FOR HEAVY LOCATE VOLUMES

Locate activity remains extremely high, especially in rural areas with limited locating resources. Anita and Roy have been working with fiber providers, excavators, and operators to support planning and ease strain on the 811 system. Their key message statewide—shared at the Virginia Utility Safety Conference and LDPC meetings—is simple: 4–6 months of advance notice gives locating teams time to prepare.

“Early information sharing keeps projects on track and the whole 811 system running smoother—from fewer Code 60s to stronger excavation readiness.”

- Roy Lax | Virginia 811 Broadband Support Specialist

### ON-THE-GROUND CHALLENGES

In meetings and field discussions, they've seen two common issues:

- 1 **High locate volume during major fiber projects** that can overwhelm locating staff without advance planning.
- 2 **Out-of-state contractors unfamiliar with Virginia law**, which Anita and Roy address through certified Virginia Damage Prevention Act training.

### LOOKING AHEAD

The next phase of broadband deployment—the \$1.48 billion BEAD-funded buildout from 2026–2029—will place even greater demand on the 811 system, making proactive communication more important than ever.

### HERE TO SUPPORT STAKEHOLDERS

Since stepping into their roles, Anita and Roy have strengthened collaboration statewide by:

- Reviewing locate request accuracy
- Supporting field teams with best practices and law requirements
- Working with LDPCs and advisory committees
- Meeting with stakeholders to troubleshoot and streamline communication

Their work helps keep broadband projects moving safely and efficiently.

### VIRGINIA BROADBAND 101 One-Pager

#### What is Broadband?

**Broadband** is high-speed internet. Virginia's broadband expansion programs define broadband as internet speeds at or above 100 Megabits per Second (Mbps) Download and 20 Mbps Upload (100/20).

#### Why is it Important?

Broadband access is essential in today's digital world. It allows us to access learning opportunities, grow our businesses, attend telehealth appointments, and stay connected with our communities.






100/20 Mbps is enough to run 6-7 seamless virtual meetings simultaneously for things like telehealth appointments, online education, and connecting with loved ones remotely.




#### What is the State of Broadband in Virginia?

Over 100k homes and businesses still need sufficient broadband access. Virginia is working toward **universal broadband access**, meaning every resident can get reliable internet. Two key programs -the **Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI)** and the **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program**- lead this effort.

#### Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI)

-  Funded **federally and by the state**. VA's budget includes **\$10M** each year in 2025 and 2026
-  Over **400,000 locations** have gained broadband access since 2022
-  Gives **grants to localities** partnered with internet providers to build broadband

#### Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

-  Funded **federally**. Virginia has **\$1.48B in federal funds** to spend on expanding internet
-  BEAD will reach **the remaining locations** that need broadband by 2030
-  Gives **grants to internet providers** that meet federal requirements to build broadband

#### Expected Timeline



Updated Oct 2025

### BROADBAND, EQUITY ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) Fact Sheet\*

The BEAD program is a federal initiative to expand high-speed internet access across the United States. \$1.48B in BEAD funds was awarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia has undertaken an efficient and strategic process to build broadband infrastructure projects that target unserved and underserved communities across the Commonwealth. Our approach supports the shared goal of universal broadband access now and for decades to come.

#### Virginia will have high-speed broadband coverage throughout the State



100%

Broadband coverage for Virginia





97%

Localities with new broadband projects

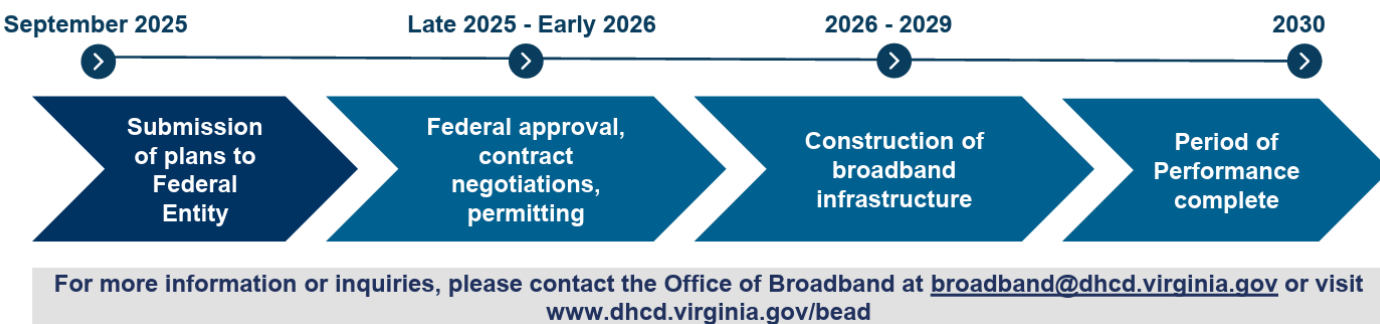
100/20 Mbps

Upload/Download speeds guaranteed

#### The BEAD Program will produce outcomes that benefit all

-  **133,472 locations** previously without broadband service will now have broadband availability in the next 4 years
-  **\$613,277,638** investment in broadband infrastructure subgrants
-  **More than \$200M** in Federal Funds saved during the most recent application process for BEAD projects
-  **Diverse Mix of Technology** that leveraged fiber, cable, fixed wireless, and low Earth orbit satellite systems to best serve Virginians

#### Next Steps



\*All statements in this Fact Sheet are dependent of Federal approval by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Updated August 7, 2025

Individuals working on VATI or BEAD-related projects are encouraged to reach out to the Virginia 811 Broadband Support Specialists at:

**BroadbandSupport@VA811.com**





# Recognizing Excellence The Virginia 811 Golden Shovel Award

**NEVA ZEEDYK**

Golden Shovel Award 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2025

Virginia 811 is proud to recognize Neva Zeedyk as our 2025 Golden Shovel Award recipient for this quarter.

This quarterly award celebrates team members who make an exceptional impact through their commitment, leadership, and embodiment of our mission to deliver a high-quality, safety-focused experience for all Virginia stakeholders. Neva demonstrated all of this — and more — during one of the most significant operational transitions in our organization's history.

Over the past year, Neva played a central role in the Exactix software conversion. She dedicated countless hours to testing, troubleshooting, and providing thoughtful feedback to ensure the rollout went smoothly. Beyond her daily responsibilities, she jumped in wherever she was needed — building quick-reference guides, supporting classroom training, and helping teammates navigate new processes with confidence.

Neva's positive attitude and calm, steady presence made a remarkable difference. Nearly every member of the Virginia 811 team benefited from her training, guidance, and willingness to explain complex information in a clear and accessible way. Her contributions strengthened our preparation, improved our materials, and directly supported the success of the conversion.

In addition to her conversion work, Neva has continued to assist with Policy Tech updates, new team member training, operations preparation, and complex locate request auditing — always bringing the same balanced, thoughtful approach that her colleagues appreciate and rely on.

Please join us in congratulating Neva Zeedyk on this well-deserved recognition.



“Neva was such a reliable presence during the software conversion. Her willingness to pitch in, share what she knew, and help teammates navigate the changes really stood out.”

Your dedication, teamwork, and passion for safety exemplify the very best of Virginia 811.

**CONGRATULATIONS NEVA!**



## Team Members Celebrating Their Service to Virginia 811 This Quarter

**Scott Crawford**

12/19/2016 | 9 Years of Service

**Devian Trevey-Boitnott**

12/4/2017 | 8 Years of Service

**Vanessa Dye**

11/29/2021 | 4 Years of Service

**Karen Wiseman**

11/29/2021 | 4 Years of Service

**Jeremy Berrios**

12/5/2022 | 3 Years of Service

**Steve Schultes**

12/5/2022 | 3 Years of Service

**Angela Cosby**

12/9/2024 | 1 Year of Service

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





# Together We Made an Impact

Here's a quick look at what we accomplished together this year:



## #VUSC2025

VUSC presented in partnership with:



# Recapping the 2025 Virginia Utility Safety Conference

The 2025 Virginia Utility Safety Conference, held October 28–30 in Virginia Beach, brought our utility, excavation, and damage prevention community together for a week built around learning, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving. With dozens of sessions, hands-on demonstrations, and a packed exhibit hall, the week reflected the shared commitment our industry has to improving safety across Virginia.

One of the standout moments was our keynote from Capt. “Sully” Sullenberger, whose message on preparation, communication, and steady decision-making resonated strongly with the work each of us does every day. Attendees also highlighted the breakout sessions as a major strength — practical, relevant, and immediately applicable on the job.

Feedback from this year’s survey reinforced the impact of the event: strong ratings for overall experience, session quality, professional value, and organization. Attendees especially valued the chance to step away from daily pressures and connect with others who understand the challenges of the field.

As we close out this year’s conference coverage, we want to thank every speaker, attendee, sponsor, and exhibitor who helped make VUSC 2025 one of our strongest events yet. The insights shared, the conversations sparked, and the connections made will continue to move our industry forward.

We look forward to seeing you again at **#VUSC2027**.



### VIEW THE 2025 VUSC PHOTO ALBUM

[View & Download](#)

Browse and download images from this year’s conference to see highlights from the sessions, exhibit hall, and industry conversations that shaped the week.

### ACCESS SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

[Download Presentations Here](#)

VUSC 2025 speaker presentations are now available to download, with additional files added as they come in.

You can access them in one convenient zip file on the main conference page—ideal for reviewing material, refreshing key points, or sharing information with your team.





# SOCIAL TENSION IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICA AND IT'S IMPACT ON... HAIR:

## Book Review of *Whiskerology: The Culture of Hair in Nineteenth Century America*

- B. Scott Crawford



The 19th century is an important century in the history of underground utilities. Industrialization, urbanization, and innovation during the period transformed America's underground utility infrastructure as gas, telecom, and electric began to accompany the historical stars of this infrastructure: water and sewer. While underground water and sewer lines literally date to the founding of civilization, the addition of gas, telecom, and electric provide us with the foundation upon which today's underground damage prevention efforts rest.

However, as Sarah Gold McBride's work *Whiskerology* thoughtfully argues, the same forces that we associate with the need for the expansion of sewer and water lines, and the addition of gas, telecom, and electric lines, namely, industrialization and urbanization, created social pressures that directly impacted Americans' understanding of hair – from expected hair styles for men and women to pseudo-scientific analyses of the shape and texture of hair to literally define the American citizen and provide a clear indicator of one's sex and race. In a not insignificant manner, McBride chronicles how hair became more than simple biology; hair was socially-defined and politically charged.

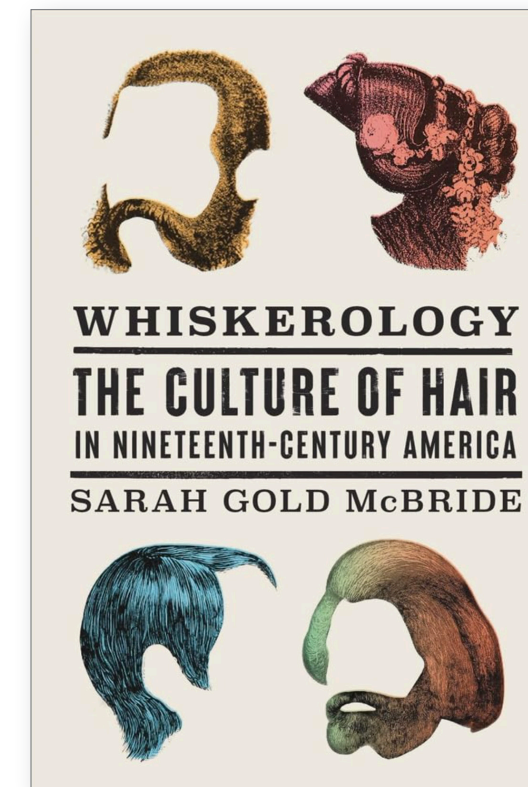
What becomes somewhat reminiscent of current debates about gender, and whether biology or personal choice determines one's sex, McBride convincingly argues that hair became a significant feature to identify both sex and race. Skin color and biology alone were not necessarily enough to allow 19th century Americans to label others as Black, White, Amerindian, or Asian, or even "man" or "woman." As rising tension surrounding slavery increased during the first half of the 19th century, culminating in the Civil War, and as society became more mobile and slowly moved from an agrarian livelihood to an industrial, urban social setting, where traditional rural, tight knit networks became strained, an individual's hair became a defining feature to determine one's status, with "White male" as the ideal.

Over the course of the century, the ideal for men was to have short hair and some level of facial hair, from mutton chops to a full beard. "Whiskerologists," those who studied hair, argued that Asian and Amerindian men, were viewed as incapable of growing the strong degree of facial hair to propel them to the level of true citizenship. Strikingly, following the Civil War, as Freedmen sought to find a political voice, they purposefully grew beards aligned with

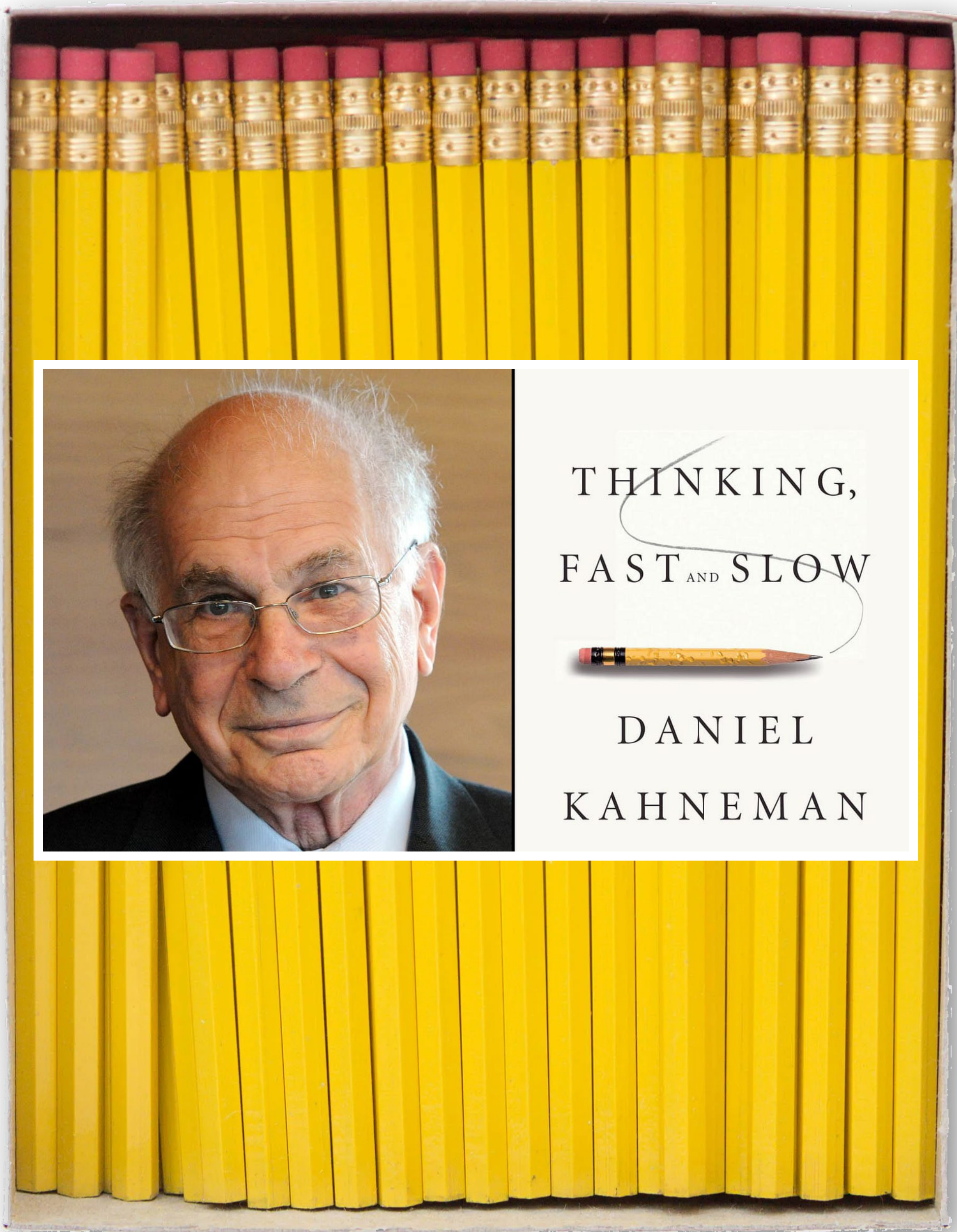
popular styles in order to "visibly embody and enact one's freedom." According to McBride, the great African-American former slave and political activist, Frederick Douglass, who was the most photographed person in the United States during the 19th century, "tried to reframe the way white Americans perceived Black people, and to claim for Black men their right to political citizenship." To Douglass, the need to battle the mistaken concept that Black men were beardless, and not, in turn, capable of exercising full citizenship was essential to helping Freedmen find a wider political voice. McBride notes that "the cultural significance of the beard as a marker of American manhood also became a way for Black men to visually and publicly proclaim their place in the body politic." Hair mattered, and hair could clearly, to the 19th century mind, reinforce perceptions about manhood and citizenship.

While this reflection on hair and race is an important component of *Whiskerology*, the work goes well beyond this theme. McBride examines societal perceptions about bearded women who appeared in "Freak Shows," the use of technology to use hair to identify one's allegedly true race, and how concerns about hair fraud were widespread as various individuals used hairstyle, wigs, and/or hair dye, along with false mustaches and beards, to portray themselves as something other than who they were. Most notably were the number of women who cut their hair short, possibly put on a false mustache, and portrayed themselves as men in order to fight for either the North or the South during the Civil War (more women disguised themselves as men and fought during the Civil War than any other American war).

Through the examination of these varied themes, McBride provides the reader with an examination of 19th century American society that is unique and fresh. She even provides examples of how confirmation bias arguably undermined many of the pseudo-scientific studies related to hair during the period. With the 19th century being so central in the damage prevention arena in relation to underground utilities, *Whiskerology* is definitely worth reading in order to gain an appreciation of the forces at work in regard to the hair on the individuals involved in helping to install, create, and use the modern underground utility infrastructure we protect today.







# A Book Recommendation for Damage Prevention Stakeholders from AI

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 book, including philosophy, fiction, and non-fiction, do you think stakeholders in damage prevention and the protection of underground utilities should read and why?" The following is ChatGPT's response.

If there is one book I believe every stakeholder in damage prevention should read, it's **Thinking, Fast and Slow** by Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman. Though not written specifically for the industry, it offers a powerful lens through which we can better understand the cognitive habits that influence decision-making, risk perception, and safety behavior — all core to the protection of underground infrastructure.

Kahneman presents a dual-system model of the human mind: System 1, which is fast, instinctive, and emotional, and System 2, which is slower, more deliberate, and logical. In the world of damage prevention, where safe excavation practices depend on consistent, thoughtful action in complex environments, the tension between these two systems plays out daily. For example, a rushed contractor might rely on System 1 thinking to "eyeball" a dig location rather than referencing the locate marks or calling for a re-mark, leading to potential damage. Understanding these systems helps explain why even seasoned professionals make avoidable mistakes — and how we can better design systems, training, and messaging to counteract those tendencies.

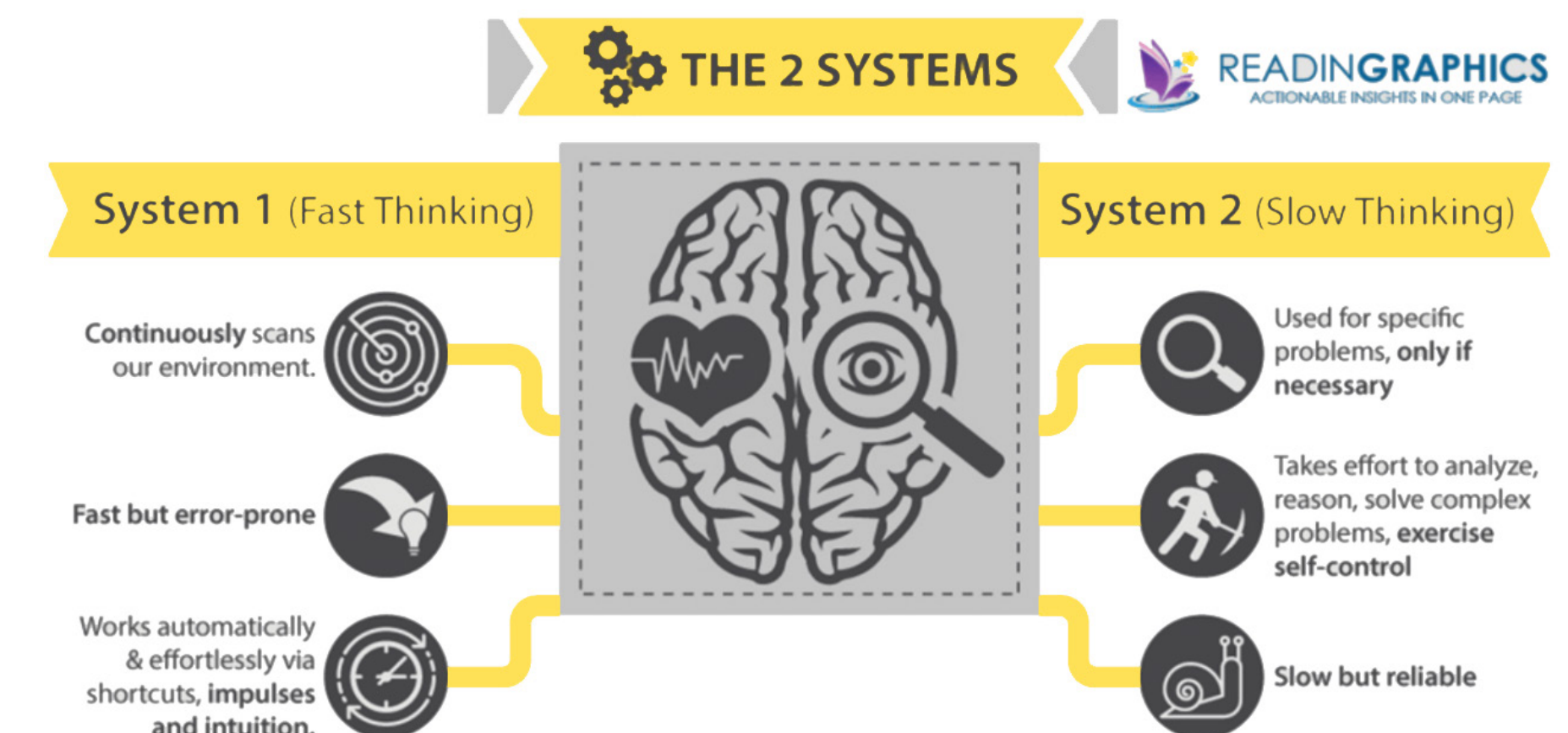
Our mission is not only technical but human. Kahneman's work challenges us to consider how stakeholders process information under pressure and why even well-intentioned people might disregard rules they intellectually agree with. This has direct application to public awareness campaigns, excavator education, and user interface design — including how we configure the 811 locate request system to encourage careful attention without cognitive overload.

Moreover, **Thinking, Fast and Slow** provides insight into loss aversion — the idea that people fear losses more than they value equivalent gains. For damage prevention, this means highlighting the cost of inaction (e.g., hitting a gas line) may be more persuasive than emphasizing the benefits of safe digging. It also underscores the importance of framing in communication: how we present information can significantly alter perception and behavior.

Virginia 811, as a nonprofit focused on safety and service, is already embracing behavioral insight to influence culture — from AI-driven locate request audits to AR/VR safety training. Kahneman's research pushes us further, inviting us to apply evidence-based psychology to the way we shape rules, design procedures, and evaluate risk.

Finally, reading **Thinking, Fast and Slow** invites a kind of humility. It reminds us that expertise does not inoculate us from error, and that we must continuously build systems that support good decisions rather than assume good intentions will suffice.

In damage prevention, as in life, digging deeper into how we think — and how we can think better — may be one of the safest moves we can make.







Passion to Serve,  
Dedication to Safety.