



The Virginia 811 Dirt

WORKING AS ONE TO GET THE JOB DONE



IN THIS ISSUE

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Letter From The CEO

Gaming Meets Damage Prevention: Introducing Underline Quest

Dig Smart On The Go: A Mobile Classroom For Safety

811 Fast Facts

2025 Virginia 811 Year End Recap

Operations Builds Momentum For A Busy Season

Virginia 811 Earns Top Workplace Honors Again in 2026

Virginia 811 Scholarship Now Open

2026 Damage Prevention Ambassador Award

Team Anniversaries

Golden Shovel Award Winner

Broadband Update

2025 PAT Team Review

A Culture of Prevention: From Submarines to Subsurface Utilities

AI, Automation, and the Rise of Human-Centered Leadership

Redefining Patriotism Through Revolutionary Art: Book Review of *The Painter's Fire*

Out-of-This-World 811 Awareness



LETTER FROM THE CEO

B. Scott Crawford

While 2025 was not a record year, it was close. In fact, it was the second busiest year in Virginia 811's twenty-three year history! In all, over 1.68 million locate requests came through the notification center, just below the 1.7 million in 2024. Continuing to have a notable impact on locate requests was fiber. However, for the first time in years, "Fence – Install, Repair or Replace" was not the number one work type! "Conduit – Install" was the number one work type, and "Fiber – Install" was second. "Fence – Install" fell to number three. This shift reinforces how much fiber continues to go into the ground as a result of government funding efforts – efforts bringing this important utility to rural families!

The pressure on the 811 process, evident since 2020 with the pandemic and reinforced with rural fiber initiatives, is going to stay with us through at least 2026, if not through 2027 and possibly 2028. With this reality, I want to personally call on all members expanding fiber in our state to take advantage of Virginia 811's Broadband Support Specialists, Anita Scott and Roy Lax, through **BroadbandSupport@VA811.com**.

Anita and Roy can assist in multiple ways to help prevent delays with excavation readiness. For one, working with internet providers (IPs) and contractors involved in rural broadband expansion, they can notify Members without providing detailed plans, affected by future buildouts so that those Members can better prepare for additional excavation in their areas. With six months warning, many Members can plan how they can accommodate this future, out of the norm, workload. This can help IPs and contractors avoid delays that can prove costly.

Anita and Roy are also able to provide training for contractors and subcontractors in the Damage Prevention Act. It is incredibly important that any contractors from other states understand Virginia law – and avoid practices out of compliance with the Damage Prevention Act. Anita and Roy can conduct training – and if your team consists of primarily Spanish speakers, our Regional Liaison, Fernando Mendez, can be brought in to conduct the training in Spanish.

Finally, Anita and Roy can support training on web locate request entry, electronic white lining, scheduling locate requests, and Locate Assist – all platforms that can improve efficiencies with excavation efforts. While Anita and Roy can support VATI and BEAD funded IPs, these platforms and options can directly support all excavators – and lead to higher excavation readiness levels. As we prepare to make JSON locate request delivery available for locators, electronic white lining will become more accessible and effective by improving locate efficiency. While not a dramatic impact, data does support excavation readiness for excavators who schedule locate requests with fewer No Shows and fewer uses of code 60s on scheduled locate requests.

In particular, Locate Assist is functional within the new Exactix environment. Locate Assist is a unique AI model that, based on performance in every area across Virginia, will send a message to an excavator that a locate request may have a higher probability of having at least one No Show due to higher than normal volume in that area. The excavator can then easily cancel the locate request and schedule it for a day up to 12 business days, helping to lower locate request volume and move the locate request to a date more likely to have less volume. If at all possible, excavators taking advantage of this function and scheduling these locate requests will help improve excavation readiness for everyone excavating in that area.

2026 is going to be another busy year. Virginia 811 is committed to doing everything it can do, within the Virginia Damage Prevention Act and the Rules of Enforcement, to support all stakeholders and help relieve pressure on the 811 process. However, these resources only help – and only work – if used. Please take advantage of these opportunities so that we can ensure safe excavation, completed within timeframes, is achieved.

B. Scott Crawford
President & CEO
Virginia 811



Bringing Damage Prevention to Life Through Augmented Reality

Virginia 811 Launches the Industry's First AR Public Awareness Game Combining Technology, Education, and Collaboration to Strengthen Safe Digging



The Digital Revolution, beginning circa 1994, has been notable, impactful, and disruptive. In only roughly a generation business leaders have witnessed the rise of a new reality: humans exist in the physical world while coexisting in a digital world. This coexistence has only become more and more dramatic, with the recent rise of an extended reality (XR) consisting of augmented reality and virtual reality. We can bemoan the loss of a previous existence all we want, but this technology development will not be regressing – it will only continue to strengthen, within the context of Moore’s Law, doubling in power every roughly 18 months!

Virginia 811 is committed to embracing emerging technologies to enhance both safety and service, and in that spirit, we are proud to announce that **Underline Quest**— the industry’s first augmented reality–based public awareness gaming application supporting damage prevention—will be available in mid-March 2026.

Underline Quest, available for both iPhone and Android, allows users to experience an abstract damage investigation. Through the gaming experience, users examine evidence tied to a damaged utility. They then examine evidence as to the root cause. Both of these experiences occur through augmented reality. The user uses their mobile device to juxtapose a real world environment with augmented reality generated images.

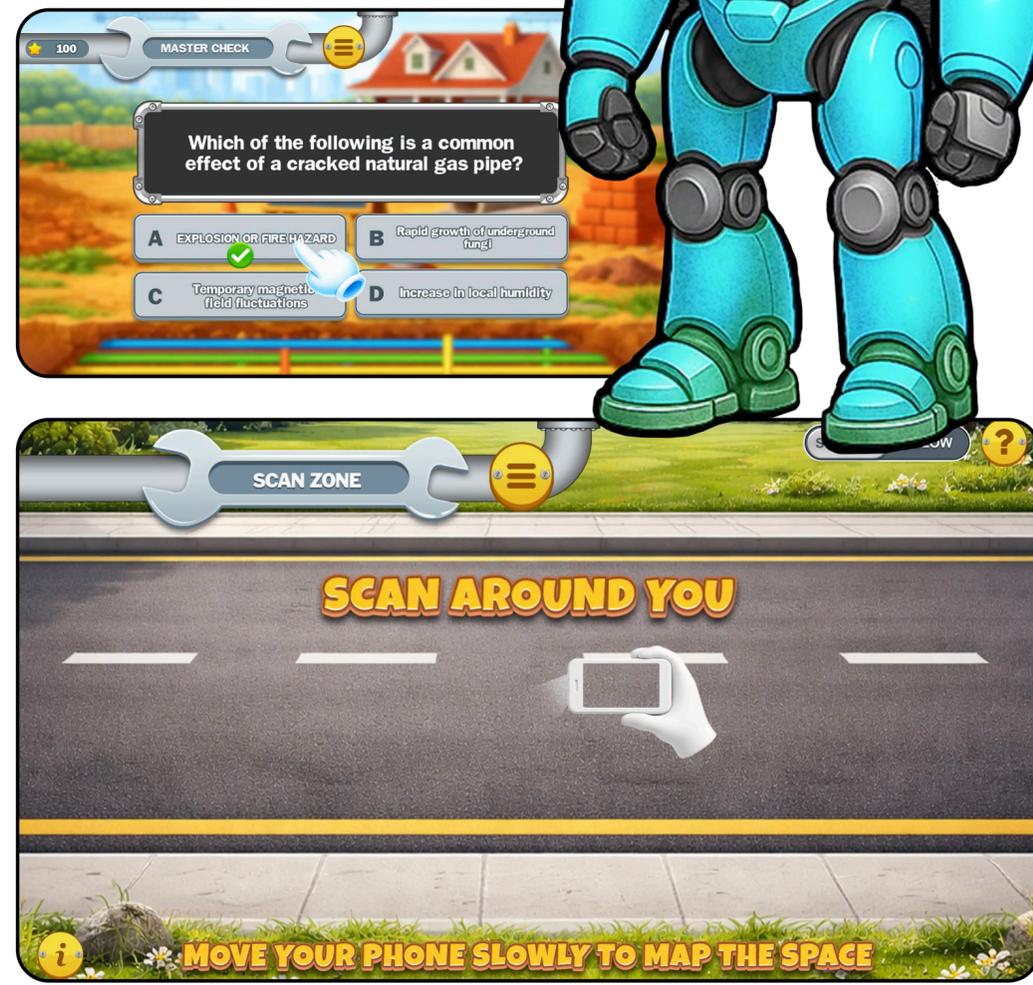
After identifying the damaged utility and the root cause, based on augmented reality images, the user plays a card game to repair the utility. The card game allows the user to leverage repair tools, in the form of cards, to remove damage cards, while confronting various random events that may, or may not, help the user repair the damaged utility.

Throughout the experience, the user is presented with various multiple-choice questions that relate to damage prevention, and the impact damaged utilities can have on a community. These questions are intended to educate the user. While the augmented reality experience may engage the user, these questions ultimately provide information that is valuable. Awareness and education, ultimately, are the strongest forces to drive down damages. Underline Quest attempts to reinforce this approach to damage prevention.

While Virginia 811 designed this application, the creation of this vision could not have been realized without another key element of damage prevention: partnerships. MISS DIG 811 (Michigan 811), and Texas 811 partnered with Virginia 811 to create this application. Their support and input were invaluable to the creation of Underline Quest. Only through industry stakeholders working together – supporting and building on individual visions of stronger damage prevention efforts – will the industry truly inch closer to zero damages! Virginia 811 sincerely appreciates the support of MISS DIG 811 and Texas 811 as we move the industry forward in the digital world we are operating within.

Of course, this effort could only be possible with talented software developers. Virginia 811 was fortunate to partner with Yotta Tech Ports (YTP), a Virginia-based, but international, team of programmers to allow Underline Quest to move from a vision to reality. YTP passionately and energetically embraced damage prevention and the concept of leveraging technology to increase awareness of underground utilities. This level of collaboration, across 811 and even international programmers, reinforces a general observation about life in a digital economy: collaboration is essential.

Virginia 811, MISS DIG 811, Texas 811, and YTP hope you enjoy Underline Quest. Be sure to spread the word about this gaming application – it is free – and it is something your stakeholders may find of value to bring awareness to underground utilities that will, in turn, support damage prevention.



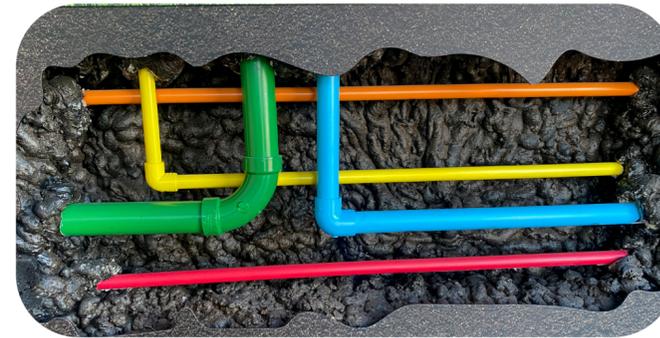
The Dig Smart Mobile Learning Center

Rolls Out Across Virginia! Bringing Hands-On Safety Lessons to Kids and Communities Across the Commonwealth

Virginia 811 is hitting the road with an exciting new way to teach kids about digging safely! The Dig Smart Mobile Learning Center is a first-of-its-kind mobile classroom designed to help children understand why contacting 811 before digging is so important.

Thanks to the generous support of Columbia Gas of Virginia, the Mobile Learning Center brings the hidden world of underground utilities to life. With colorful displays, interactive demonstrations, and age-appropriate lessons, kids discover how utility lines work, why they matter, and what can happen if someone digs without checking first.

“Reaching young learners is one of the most powerful ways we can build a safer future,” said Scott Crawford, President & CEO of Virginia 811. “The Dig Smart Mobile Learning Center sparks curiosity early, helping children carry safety knowledge into adulthood—and even teach their families along the way.”



What Children Will Explore in the Mobile Learning Center:

- Interactive zones tailored for elementary learners
- A child-friendly walkthrough of how locate requests work
- Animations showing safe digging in simple terms
- Hands-on displays of what's underground
- Games that reward “Dig Smart” decision-making

By bringing education directly to communities, Virginia 811—and partners Columbia Gas of Virginia and contributions from GAC Enterprises—is helping build a culture of safety that protects both people and essential services for years to come.

Reserve a 2026 visit from the Dig Smart Mobile Learning Center for your school or community.

Request your 2026 visit at www.va811.com

VIRGINIA 811 2025 YEAR END RECAP

811 FAST FACTS

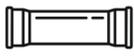
CHANNEL	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
PHONE	49,328	24.46%
WEB	152,373	75.54%

Total YTD 2026
201,701

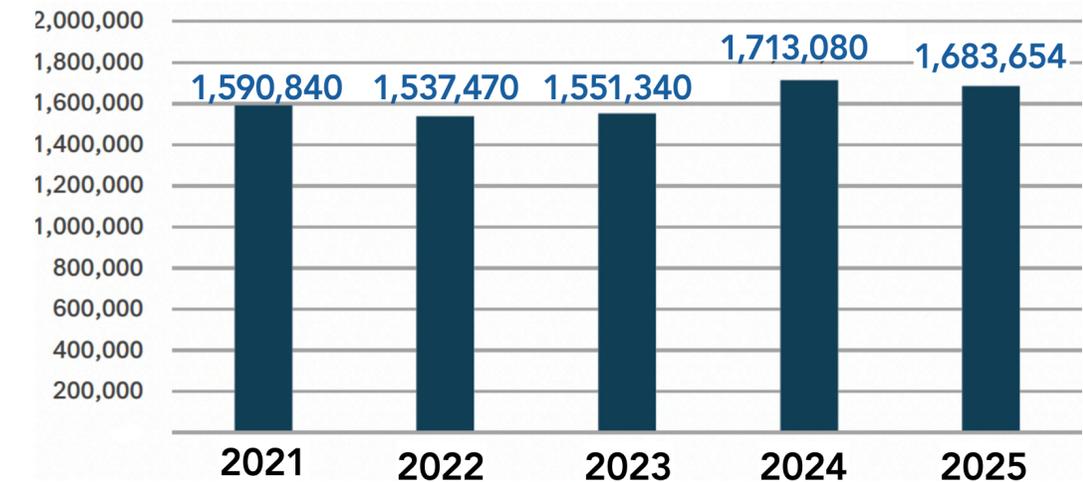
Highlights

- Total Requests: **1.68M**
- Change from 2024: **-1.7%**
- Online Submissions: **72.3%**
- New Platform: **Exactix launched June 27th**
- **Conduit Install ranked #1** Work Type
- **Fence work dropped** to 3rd place
- **Fiber growth continues** for 3rd straight year

Top 5 Work Types

				
CONDUIT Install	FIBER Install	FENCE Install, Repair or Replace	COMMS CABLE Install	GAS SERVICE Repair, Replace or Abandon
101,250	97,657	88,904	85,101	67,841

Annual Locate Request Volume 2021 - 2025



READY TO DIG IN Operations Powers Up for Spring

Operations is stepping into the year with strong momentum and a growing team ready to support safe excavation across Virginia.

We're excited to celebrate a major milestone — three new team members who joined us in November 2025 have successfully completed their Damage Prevention Specialist (DPS) training. Over the past several weeks, they've built expertise in locate request accuracy, system navigation, customer engagement, and the Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act. Their dedication is already making a difference, and we're proud to officially welcome **Kristy Groff, Jennifer (Jen) Corbally** and **Logan Dye** to the team.

As spring approaches, excavation activity across the Commonwealth begins to rise — and so does the demand for our support. Operations is preparing for this seasonal surge with the people, tools, and processes needed to respond quickly and effectively.

Alongside team growth, we're strengthening how we work by enhancing quality evaluations and refining performance standards. These improvements will help drive greater consistency, reinforce accuracy, and ensure an exceptional customer experience during our busiest time of year.

Operations is energized, prepared, and ready to deliver. **Here's to a safe and successful spring season!**

- Diana Stokes | Manager of Operations | Virginia 811

Virginia 811 Earns Continued Recognition as a Top Virginia Workplace.

Virginia 811 is celebrating continued recognition as one of the Commonwealth's top employers, building on its 2025 honor as one of Virginia's Best Places to Work with new 2026 awards for **Best Hybrid/Remote Workplace** and **Best Nonprofit Workplace** from Virginia Business.

These recognitions, driven by employee feedback, highlight the organization's strong culture of trust, collaboration, and engagement, as well as its commitment to communication, benefits, and leadership.

"Being recognized two years in a row — and across additional categories — is incredibly meaningful," said B. Scott Crawford, President & CEO. "It reflects the intentional culture we've built where employees feel supported, valued, and connected to our mission."

Virginia 811 continues to foster a people-first environment that blends flexibility with accountability, offering professional development, strong leadership, and a focus on well-being. As Virginia's designated one-call notification center, the organization's commitment to protecting underground utilities and public safety is matched by its dedication to creating a workplace where employees can thrive.

The additional 2026 honors further demonstrate Virginia 811's ability to deliver operational excellence while maintaining a connected, high-performing culture — reinforcing that investing in people strengthens both the organization and the communities it serves.



WE'RE HONORED TO BE AMONG THE BEST!



Virginia 811 Scholarship Opportunity

Virginia 811 is proud to support the next generation of professionals through our annual scholarship program. We will award one \$1,700 scholarship to a student enrolling in a community college, accredited trade school, or four-year university in Fall 2026.

- Applicants may be a 2026 graduating high school senior or adult learner planning to pursue an accreditation or academic degree.
- For high school graduating applicant, parent or guardian is employed in the underground utility protection stakeholder community (excavator, locator, or member utility).
- For adult learner, individual is pursuing accreditation related to underground utility protection stakeholder community (excavator, locator, or member utility).
- Applicants must be planning to enroll beginning Fall of 2026 at one of the following:
 - Community College
 - Accredited Trade School Program
 - A four-year, accredited, college or university

Know a high school senior or adult learner with a connection to the underground utility protection industry?

If so, encourage them to apply!

For details and application information, visit: <https://va811.com/virginia-811-scholarship/>



KRYSTA SIMPSON
2025 Damage Prevention Ambassador Award Recipient
Water and Gas Compliance Coordinator Utilities Department | Danville Utilities

2026 Damage Prevention Ambassador Award

Celebrating Individuals Who Embody the Mission of Safety and Education

Now Accepting Nominations for 2026

For nomination details or to submit a nomination, visit: <https://va811.com/damage-prevention-ambassador-award/>

We look forward to sharing more details later in 2026 and acknowledging the remarkable individuals shaping a safer future for all.





HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Team Members Celebrating Their Service to Virginia 811 This Quarter

Rob Hogan 2/18/2002 24 Years of Service	Kim Hermanson 2/4/2008 18 Years of Service	Randy Corvin 1/3/2023 3 Years of Service
Mike Hosey 3/17/2003 23 Years of Service	Kenny Spade 2/4/2008 18 Years of Service	Jessica Lassiter 1/3/2023 3 Years of Service
Amy Wright 3/17/2003 23 Years of Service	Robyn Divers 2/14/2011 15 Years of Service	Dylan Mullins 1/3/2023 3 Years of Service
Kai Marxen 2/16/2004 22 Years of Service	Anna Hudgins 2/25/2013 13 Years of Service	Annie Dahmen 1/8/2024 2 Years of Service
Stacey Clark 1/18/2005 21 Years of Service	Connesha Waterfield 2/25/2013 13 Years of Service	Tina Kane 1/8/2024 2 Years of Service
Julie Rector 1/30/2006 20 Years of Service	Caitlyn Goodchild 1/22/2018 8 Years of Service	Hollie Payne 1/8/2024 2 Years of Service
Stephanie O. Ferguson 2/21/2006 20 Years of Service	Tiffany Uhl 3/22/2018 8 Years of Service	Anita Scott 1/8/2024 2 Years of Service
Melissa Ray 2/21/2006 20 Years of Service	Gail Biggs 2/4/2019 7 Years of Service	Jennifer Cogar 3/25/2024 2 Years of Service
Janie Wilhelm 1/29/2007 19 Years of Service	Pat Allen 3/30/2021 5 Years of Service	Sarah Hatter 3/25/2024 2 Years of Service
Lauren McKenna 2/12/2007 19 Years of Service	Joseph Sparrow 3/28/2022 4 Years of Service	Frank Giannini 3/31/2024 2 Years of Service

343 Years of Combined Virginia 811 Experience

THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE

Recognizing Excellence The Virginia 811 Golden Shovel Award

MARCY CARROLL

2025 Year-End Golden Shovel Award

Virginia 811 is proud to recognize **Marcy Carroll, GIS, Vendor, and Enterprise Risk Systems Supervisor**, as our **Golden Shovel Award recipient**, honoring her exceptional contributions and impact across the organization.

Marcy's leadership and dedication have been instrumental during a period of significant change. Most notably, she played a critical role in the recent system conversion, serving as testing lead and ensuring findings were carefully validated and resolved. Her willingness to step in wherever needed — including supporting the QA/QC team over the Fourth of July holiday weekend — exemplifies the commitment and teamwork this award celebrates.

In addition to her technical expertise, Marcy has continued to deliver outstanding support in mapping and vendor management while helping stakeholders adapt to new processes. Her ability to balance complex responsibilities with professionalism and a collaborative spirit has made a lasting impact across departments.

Marcy's contributions reflect the values at the heart of Virginia 811's mission: quality, service, and a steadfast commitment to supporting safe and effective operations. We are thrilled to celebrate her achievements and the positive difference she continues to make.



“ Marcy consistently went above and beyond — balancing testing, stakeholder support, and mapping while helping guide the organization through a critical transition. ”

— B. Scott Crawford, President & CEO, Virginia 811

Your dedication, leadership, and commitment to excellence truly represent the best of Virginia 811.

CONGRATULATIONS MARCY!

Broadband Progress Update



Virginia 811's Broadband Support Specialists, Anita Scott and Roy Lax, continue to play a vital role in keeping large-scale broadband projects coordinated and on track. Through proactive outreach, locate request reviews, and stakeholder collaboration, the team is helping reduce delays and strengthen communication across the industry.

Broadband Support Highlights

At-a-Glance Broadband Efforts (Key Metrics)

- 1,399+ Locate Requests Reviewed YTD
- 3 Industry Events Supported

How the Team Supports Projects



Coordination & Communication

- Connect locators, excavators, and broadband providers
- Support planning for resource-intensive projects



Project Readiness

- Maintain broadband contractor contact database
- Communicate timelines to affected utilities



Locate Request Review & Analysis

- Identify three-hour notices and no-shows
- Review high-volume locate request activity



Guidance & Training

- Recommend best practices
- Support Web Ticket Entry (WTE) adoption
- Provide locate request training

Operational Impact

- Helps reduce project delays through proactive coordination
- Strengthens communication across stakeholders
- Supports advance planning for utilities
- Promotes efficient broadband deployment

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.

BroadbandSupport@VA811.com

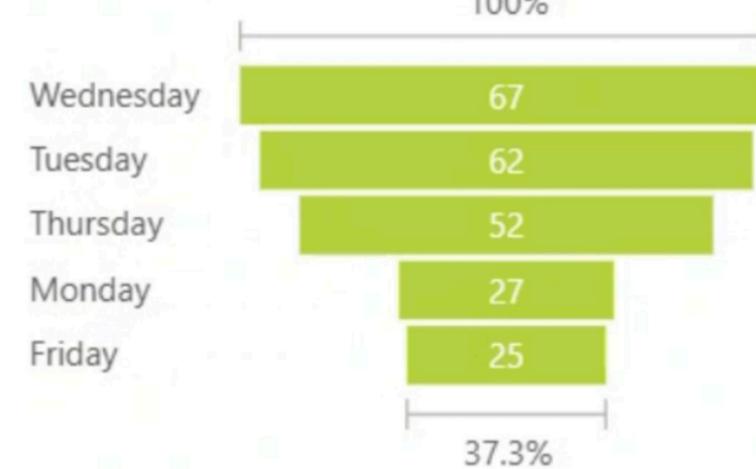
Public Awareness & Training (PAT) 2025 Review

TOTAL TRAININGS

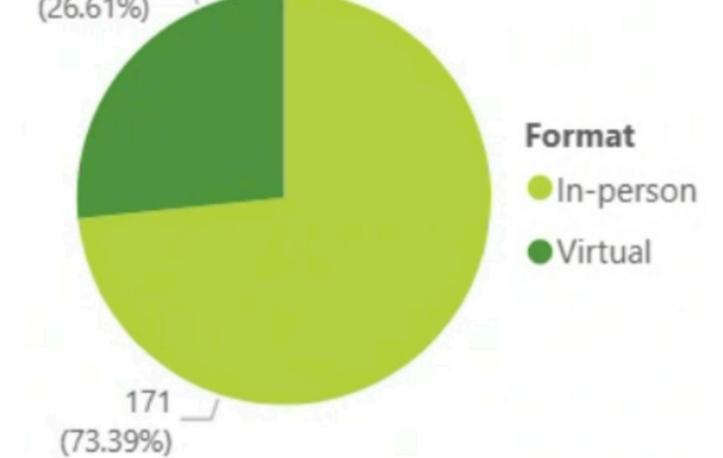
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Virginia 811's PAT team sustained strong performance in 2025, successfully navigating the transition to Exactix through dedicated training and teamwork while continuing to meet core service expectations.

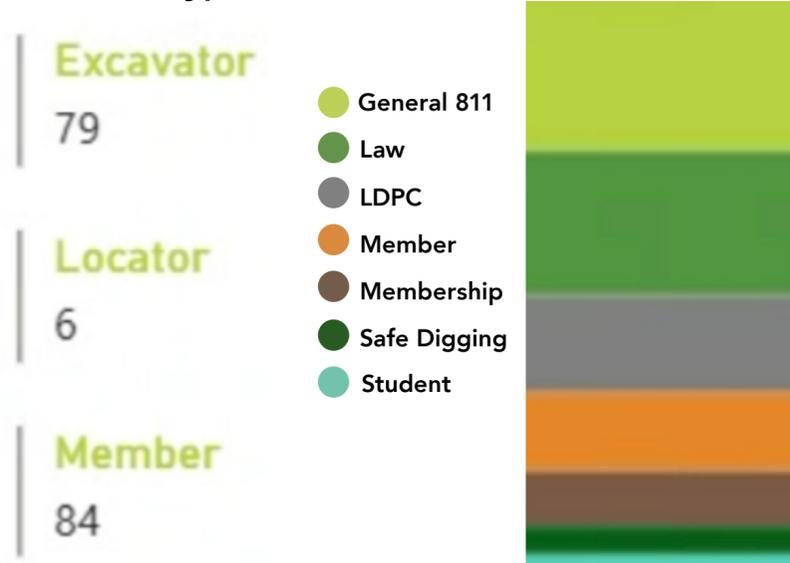
Trainings by Day of Week



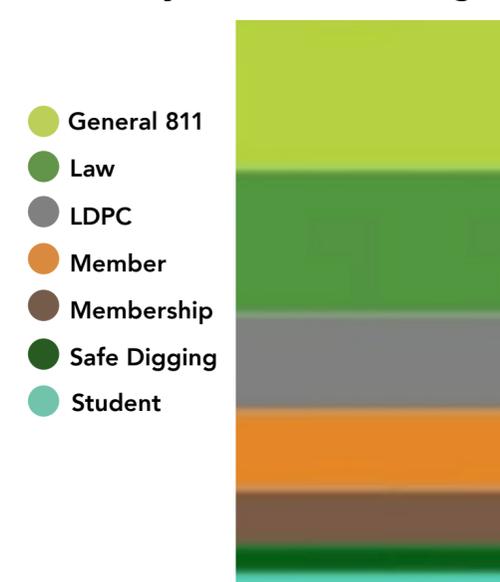
Trainings by Format



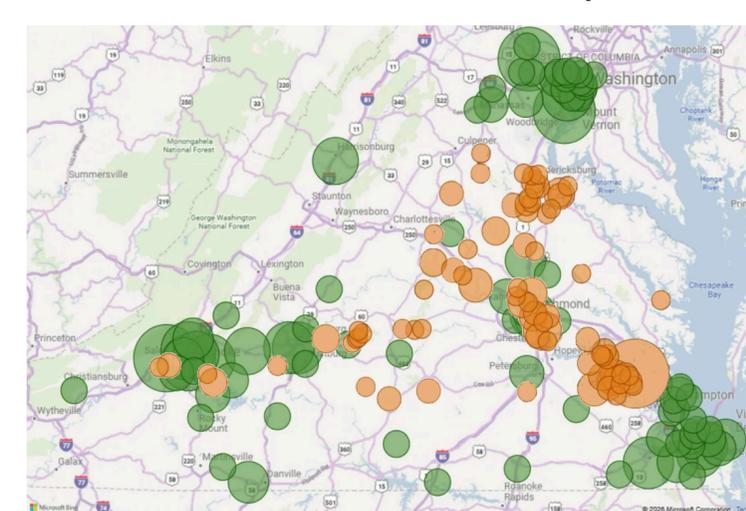
Trainings by Trainee Type



Events by Year and Training Topic



2025 PAT Team Event Map



● Marketing Events ● Training Events

A Culture of Prevention: Lessons from Submarines to Subsurface Utilities

How Navy Veteran and Virginia 811 Team Member Tim Poole Connects the Navy's SUBSAFE Program to the Dig With CARE Message

In the realm of safety protocols, two seemingly disparate programs—the **U.S. Navy's Submarine Safety Program (SUBSAFE)** and **Virginia 811's Dig with CARE** message—share a common ethos: preventing catastrophic failures through rigorous procedures and awareness. Both emerged from the need to mitigate risks in high-stakes environments, whether underwater or underground, highlighting how structured safety measures can save lives, protect infrastructure, and ensure operational continuity. Together, their histories and practices reveal how disciplined, prevention-focused systems shape stronger safety cultures across industries.



USS THRESHER (SSN-593)
at sea on 24 July 1961

The SUBSAFE program was born from tragedy. In 1963, the USS Thresher, a nuclear-powered submarine, sank during deep-dive tests, claiming 129 lives. This disaster prompted the Navy to establish SUBSAFE in June 1963, with full implementation by 1968. Its core objective is to provide “maximum reasonable assurance” of submarine hull integrity and recovery from unanticipated flooding. SUBSAFE applies to all systems exposed to sea pressure or critical for flood control, enforcing strict design reviews, material certifications, fabrication standards, testing, and record-keeping. Materials must be traceable from manufacture to installation, including source details like smelting processes for metals. Annual training, audits, and compliance verification ensure adherence. Remarkably, since its rollout, no U.S. submarine has been lost to flooding, underscoring its efficacy.

In contrast, Virginia 811's Dig with CARE is a public safety campaign tied to the state's underground utility protection service. Mandated by Virginia law, it requires anyone planning to dig—homeowners, contractors, or excavators—to contact 811 at least three business days in advance. This free service dispatches professional locators to mark buried lines for gas, electric, water, sewer, and telecom with flags or paint, preventing accidental strikes. The CARE acronym breaks it down: Contact VA811 before digging; Allow time for marking; Respect the marks; and Excavate carefully, using hand tools within 24 inches of marks. Available 24/7 for emergencies, it aims to avert injuries, property damage, outages, and environmental harm. Promoted through media and toolkits, it's a statewide effort to foster safe digging habits.

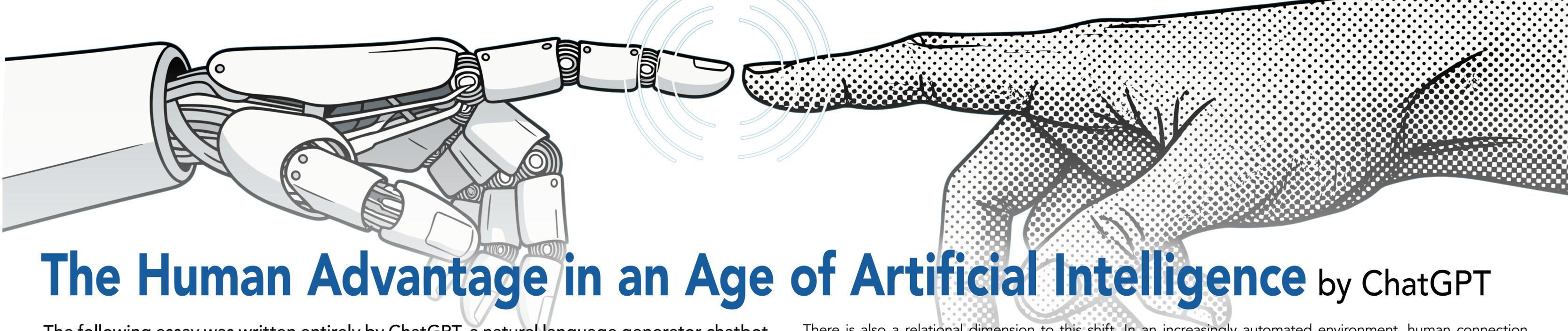
At their heart, both programs champion prevention over reaction. SUBSAFE's “maximum reasonable assurance” mirrors Dig with CARE's emphasis on proactive steps to identify and mitigate hazards—be it pressure boundaries in subs or utility lines underground. They rely on certification and marking: SUBSAFE certifies components with traceable evidence, while Virginia 811 uses visible marks to guide safe actions. Compliance is non-negotiable, enforced via audits, training, and legal mandates, cultivating a culture of discipline and dedication to safety. Both have proven track records: SUBSAFE's zero-loss streak and Virginia 811's role in reducing damages.

Ultimately, these programs illustrate that effective safety transcends domains. SUBSAFE's meticulous standards inspire enhanced utility training, while Dig with CARE's message reminds us that awareness is key. In an era of complex infrastructures, blending discipline with accessibility ensures resilience.



USS PASADENA (SSN-752) Underway Near Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Chief Tim Poole, USN (Ret.), served in the U.S. Navy's Submarine Force from 2001–2021. Today, he continues his commitment to public safety as Communications and Display Truck Specialist at Virginia 811.



The Human Advantage in an Age of Artificial Intelligence by ChatGPT

The following essay was written entirely by ChatGPT, a natural language generator chatbot developed by OpenAI. The prompt to which ChatGPT responded is **“Discuss your thoughts on the paradox existing between artificial intelligence and automation and the ever increasing need of human-centric skills, such as empathy, ethics, communication, etc., in business.”**

Artificial intelligence and automation are no longer futuristic concepts—they are embedded in the daily rhythm of modern business. Algorithms sort data, chatbots answer routine questions, predictive models forecast trends, and automated systems execute repetitive tasks with speed and precision. Organizations that embrace these tools often experience dramatic gains in efficiency, accuracy, and scalability.

And yet, at the very moment automation is accelerating, the demand for deeply human skills—empathy, ethics, communication, adaptability, and sound judgment—is rising just as quickly.

At first glance, this appears paradoxical. If machines can do more, shouldn't we need less from people? The opposite is proving true.

Automation is exceptionally good at handling structured, repeatable processes. It can analyze millions of data points in seconds, flag inconsistencies, and operate without fatigue. In many industries, this frees team members from manual work that once consumed hours of effort. Time is reclaimed. Errors are reduced. Insights become more accessible.

But efficiency does not equal wisdom.

AI can generate recommendations, but it cannot fully understand context the way a human can. It does not grasp the emotional nuance in a tense conversation, the ethical implications behind a complex decision, or the subtle dynamics of trust between stakeholders. It cannot weigh competing values in the way a leader must when facing a difficult trade-off.

As automation increases, human decision-making becomes more consequential—not less. When routine tasks are delegated to machines, what remains for people are the responsibilities that require discernment, empathy, and creativity. The work shifts upward in complexity. Leaders are called to interpret data thoughtfully, communicate clearly, and ensure that technology serves a broader mission rather than simply driving productivity.

There is also a relational dimension to this shift. In an increasingly automated environment, human connection becomes a differentiator. Customers remember how they were treated, not just how quickly their request was processed. Employees stay engaged when they feel heard, respected, and valued—not merely when workflows are efficient. Trust, morale, and culture cannot be automated. They must be cultivated.

Ethics presents another critical dimension of this paradox. Artificial intelligence reflects the data and assumptions embedded within it. Without human oversight, bias can go undetected and unintended consequences can multiply at scale. Responsible organizations recognize that technology must operate within clearly defined ethical boundaries. That requires people who are willing to ask difficult questions, examine assumptions, and ensure accountability.

The future of business, therefore, is not a contest between humans and machines. It is a partnership.

Artificial intelligence expands our capacity—it helps us see patterns we might otherwise miss, execute processes more reliably, and innovate more rapidly. But human beings define purpose. We articulate mission. We decide what “better” actually means. We determine how success is measured—not only in terms of efficiency, but in terms of impact, integrity, and service.



The organizations that thrive in this era will not be those that simply automate the fastest. They will be those that intentionally invest in human-centered skills alongside technological advancement. They will train leaders to communicate with clarity, to listen with empathy, to navigate ethical complexity, and to inspire shared commitment.

Technology can help us move faster. Human-centered leadership ensures we move in the right direction. In the end, the true paradox dissolves. The more powerful our machines become, the more essential our humanity proves to be.

Reflections of the AI/Human Paradox, Digital Art, B. Scott Crawford with ChatGPT, 2026

THE MEANING OF PATRIOT

A Review of *The Painter's Fire: A Forgotten History of the Artists Who Championed the American Revolution* by Zara Anishanslin

What exactly is a patriot? Is it one who directly fights for his or her country? Is it one who provides political leadership – or sparks and drives social change aligned with national ideals? More specifically, what did it mean to be a patriot at the time of the American Revolution, as the United States witnessed its first generation of patriots?

For the most part, history has viewed patriots during the Revolution, 1775-1783, as those who provided the political vision for the emerging nation, in other words, the “Founding Fathers,” and those who took martial action against the British, including those who were part of the Sons of Liberty and those who formed the Continental, and then United States, army and navy. Specific to the Revolutionary period, overwhelmingly, based on this view of “patriot,” Patriots were white men. Eighteenth century societal norms surrounding both race and gender created an environment where those not white and not men had challenges finding a public presence and voice. However, in her work *The Painter's Fire*, Zara Anishanslin demonstrates that the traditional understanding of patriot in relation to the Revolution is deficient and even erroneous.

Through her focus on African-American and women artists, including Prince Demah, a man born into slavery but who gained his freedom and became a professional artist, professionally trained in England, Anishanslin demonstrates that Revolution era patriotism is complex and multifaceted. Prince Demah navigated horrific challenges in order to find the opportunity to study under the English painter Robert Edge Pine, gain freedom from slavery, earn a living through painting in Massachusetts, and enlist in the Continental Army to fight the British. Sadly, he died as a result of a smallpox epidemic, not allowing him to continue to contribute to the Patriot cause or America's aesthetic history. Prince Demah demonstrated a strong belief in the ideals driving the Patriot cause, which was antithetical to those who owned him as a slave as they were Loyalists.



One particularly interesting section suggests that Prince Demah may have been the portrait artist behind the iconic image of Phillis Wheatley, used on her book of poetry that landed in Boston Harbor on one of the ships that was the focus of the Boston Tea Party. Within the iconography found in the portrait of Wheatley, Anishanslin demonstrates how the image underscores republican ideals tied to the Patriot cause, albeit from a unique African-American perspective rather than the traditional white perspective. Wheatley is presented not as a slave or servant but as a woman engaged in creative work – not manual labor. Juxtaposed with other works of art that include depictions of Blacks from the period, Wheatley is treated respectfully, not as a caricature. Such imagery elevates Wheatley and suggests a degree of equality, which would, of course, become the basic premise of the Declaration of Independence: that all men are created equal.

While Demah may not have been the artist responsible for the image that inspired the engraving for the book, Anishanslin makes a strong case this is possible. If it was not Demah, the other two contenders are both African American artists. Thus, with such strong republican, Patriot-based, iconography being created by African Americans, for a book of poems that similarly have a Patriot message, the idea that Revolutionary Patriotism was monopolized by one particular race, and even gender, is misguided.

The strength of Anishanslin's work relates to her strong focus on Americans living in England during the Revolution and demonstrating Patriot zeal. Again, through examining American born artists working in England during the Revolution, Anishanslin identifies some interesting perspectives on the Revolution as it directly impacted Great Britain. While Anishanslin chronicles the antics of “John the Painter,” who used his knowledge of chemicals related to mixing paints to create incendiary devices that he used to bomb several British ports, the focus remains on artists' ability to create republican fueled iconography.

This art, both in the form of paintings and the creation of wax figures, created a visual reflection of the ideals driving the Patriot movement in America within Great Britain itself. Through imagery, the British were forced to confront these ideals at home, fueling debate internally about how Britain should proceed in relation to handling the Revolution and even advance republican reforms within its own government. In the case of Patience Wright, whose wax figures received much attention, not only was she able to artistically reflect republican and classical liberal ideals, she used her gallery space to eavesdrop on visiting British officials and pass along information to American contacts in America by hiding messages in the heads of her wax figures being shipped their for display.

For those interested in the American Revolution, *The Painter's Fire* is definitely worth reading. However, personally, I kept coming back to the ultimate question: what is a patriot? Patriotism obviously moves beyond simply politics and actual military service. As Anishanslin suggests, even marginalized voices can, through art and through service, find a way to demonstrate patriotism and the support for the ideals upon which the United States rests. In that context, I can't help but think all we do in damage prevention – protecting life, property, the environment, and Virginia's underground utilities, allows us all to claim the title of patriot.



- B. Scott Crawford

The ETs are Coming! The ETs are Coming!

Virginia 811's Plan to Expand Public Awareness

- B. Scott Crawford and ChatGPT

Historically, dating back millennium, humans have looked up to the sky and imagined if we are alone. Throughout history, across cultures, there are written and artistic representations of objects in the sky that were thought to come from other worlds. Beginning in the 1950s, Americans became fascinated with the thought of life beyond Earth and began recording UFO sightings. The 20th century psychologist Carl Jung even wrote a book about this growing obsession in the late 1950s and attributed it to a mass psychosis driven by the rapid changes unfolding in the world following World War II – especially the emergence of a Cold War that had existential ramifications with the possibility of nuclear apocalypse! To Jung, fear and anxiety led individuals to project archetypal images of UFOs onto a global consciousness.

There may very well be something to Jung's theory as increases in UFO sightings has somewhat mirrored global crisis. It is almost as if on cue with a Pandemic, followed by the rise of advanced AI and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we as a society, yet again, became interested in extraterrestrial life and "UFOs."

However, President Trump's recent announcement that a body of government documentation related to extraterrestrial life is going to be released to the public has drawn some attention as a small chance that Jung may have been mistaken emerges! This leads us to ponder: what if extraterrestrial life really does exist – and has made contact?

Well, with damage prevention essential, Virginia 811 has to imagine a need to expand public awareness to any new stakeholders that may emerge among us – human or otherwise! As such, Virginia 811 has created a small, AI-driven campaign imagining a positive interaction with these extraterrestrials – with AI generated comic-style images and AI generated videos. Not only does this campaign help educate our hopefully new friends about the importance of protecting our underground utility infrastructure, it highlights the very real sci-fi world in which we live and operate!

Be sure to follow along with our content – and share our posts as we cannot be sure our social media channels are not being monitored by some otherworldly entities! You sharing this content can help these visitors understand their responsibilities within the 811 process!

And – who knows? Highlighting the 811 process might be just enough evidence these extraterrestrials need to decide we are civilized and advanced enough to save – and even emulate!



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Passion to Serve,
Dedication to Safety.