



THE VA811 DIRT

WORKING AS ONE, TO GET THE JOB DONE

VA811'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER / JUNE 2020



An End of an Era



FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I have announced to the VA811 Board of Directors my retirement date of July 1st, 2020. I will however; continue to serve the Board of Directors in an advisory role for a two-year period. Scott Crawford, our current Vice President, will assume the duties of President & CEO. Scott and I have worked the past three years in preparation for this succession. Scott embraces an identical work ethic and a genuine care for our employees and will continue the existing culture that flourished at VA811. I'm confident VA811 will continue its success under Scott's leadership.



Rick Pevarski, President & CEO

Retirement comes with mixed emotions. Having started the organization in 2001, working from my basement developing a business plan, to facilitating the most recent accomplishment of our new building, every aspect and challenge within VA811 has been incredibly rewarding. My professional career has always been filled with exciting opportunities.

The employees of VA811 have created a culture of inclusion and openness; with Social Committees, Wellness Committees and many ad hoc committees. VA811 employees have embraced a culture of continuous improvement with our achieving the ISO certification. With our drive for employee inclusion and continually improving, a feeling of family has grown within the organization. I hope, in my retirement, to continue to foster these friendships with all our employees both past and present. We have such an incredible team.

The underground utility damage prevention industry is unique; with a common international goal of public safety. I have been fortunate to serve with several industry associations where we had great accomplishments while also being able to build great friendships. The VA811 membership and stakeholder community has been very supportive of VA811 and again, the relationships have always been friendships. I have also been fortunate to serve under an incredible Board of Directors that have always been supportive of the VA811 initiatives and supportive of me and my growth in the industry. To all my friends in the damage prevention community, keep keeping us safe!!!

I have always embraced the quote by Confucius: "Choose a work that you love, and you won't have to work another day". I have been privileged to have chosen VA811.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Pevarski".

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Upcoming Holidays

*Friday, July 3

Independence Day

*Monday, September 7

Labor Day

Normal Hours of Operation:

Monday-Friday 7am - 5pm

Emergency & 3-hour notice tickets are taken 24/7/365.

The Contact Center is CLOSED on holidays and only takes Emergency or 3-Hour Notice tickets on those days.

OUTREACH & EVENTS

VA811 CONTINUES OPERATING DURING THE PANDEMIC

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA811 has been able to operate at 100% capacity while providing social distancing by sending 92% of the workforce to work remotely. This was achieved swiftly at the beginning of the pandemic when Governor Northam mandated school closures. Employees have been given the technology needed to work from home and 100% of surveyed employees feel secure in their job with many praising VA811 on its response and the care given to employee's health and well-being during this time.

In order to ensure the VA811 team remains connected during this unique period, VA811 has begun to implement bi-weekly "virtual hangouts" allowing all team members to interact with each other via video conferencing. These events, which have begun to incorporate games, such as a special VA811 version of BINGO and Name that Tune, have demonstrated how videoconferencing platforms, including both GoToMeeting and Zoom, have created a means through which team members can engage one another in positive ways and stay connected. Coinciding with this has been the creation of the "Positivity Patrol," spearheaded by Nikki Turpin in the Public Awareness and Training Department. Through this effort, VA811's internal social media platform, Yammer, has been leveraged to not only share important updates in relation to operations during the Pandemic, but to engage the team through a host of activities, including, but not limited to, "spirit weeks," contests, and the sharing of recipes of dishes the team has been eating while staying at home. These efforts have helped to mitigate the risk of the VA811 team feeling isolated and disconnected at a time when the vast majority of the team are working remotely.



Kari Harris participates in crazy hair day!



Stacey Clark shows off her VA811 shirt on Spirit Day.



VA811 team members have some fun during a virtual hangout.

AN END OF AN ERA

FOUNDER AND CEO RICK PEVARSKI TO RETIRE

Possibly it was while floating hundreds of feet above the Earth, with the only thing between experiencing a unique form of freedom and a tragic fall being heat from a gas-powered burner and a nylon canvas filled with hot air, that Rick Pevarski first began to appreciate the landscape that contains hundreds of thousands of miles of underground utilities running through it.



Rick once piloted hot air balloons. He was happy to see CGA using this balloon to spread the safe digging message.

Of course, simply appreciating a beauty that the average person does not get to appreciate may not have been enough to carry Rick toward the great heights he would reach as a figure in public safety and damage prevention. Rick was able to glean a unique appreciation for safety as he worked on oil rigs in the West and as he enjoyed a 17-year tenure at Roanoke Gas Company, serving as Vice President of Operations and Marketing. Rick experienced first-hand going into neighborhoods with a gas leak and making sure everything was done to keep everyone safe.

All of these experiences helped shape Rick Pevarski. And in an important way, these experiences brought Rick into a position in 2001 where he was chosen to create and lead a new one call center where anyone excavating in Virginia could easily notify all utilities their work might possibly affect, ensuring both life and property could be protected and that services would not be interrupted. Rick's founding of the Virginia Utility Protection Service, Inc., now known as VA811, is a milestone in all of the phenomenal work so many amazing individuals have done to dramatically reduce the number of damages to underground utilities over the past almost two decades.

Or maybe it was the period in his young adult life that Rick could honestly state that while he had flown in a plane, he had never actually landed in a plane! Yes, Rick's first experiences with flight ended with him jumping from planes and floating, safely, to the ground using a parachute – all before he ever ended a flight with a successful landing actually still inside the plane!

Possibly, it was while he viewed the landscape from such heights when serving as a hot air balloon pilot and parachuting from planes, that Rick came to appreciate the underground utility filled landscape. Just maybe, it was at that time when Rick began to develop what would become a true passion for preserving that landscape through protecting our underground utilities.



Rick manning the grill at a United Way cookout.

AN END OF AN ERA



Rick in Greece. He's visited every continent.



Rick, along with his wife, Eileen.

While Rick would be the first to admit, and insist, that the effort to protect underground utilities and drive damages down has been a team effort, it must be noted that Rick played an important role on this team.

Rick's humble, levelheaded, and passionate desire to build partnerships is a major ingredient in the recipe that has brought notable success in damage prevention in Virginia.

Rick's leadership at VA811, from meeting a requirement in 2002 to have the call center totally up and running in a timeframe of four months, to positioning VA811 as a respected one call center, serving as a model at the international level as no less than six countries have visited VA811 to learn about damage prevention, is notable. Sadly, time is something that no leader can mitigate. And with great sadness, VA811 has announced that Rick is retiring at the end of June 2020. Yet, if anyone has earned a happy retirement, it is Rick Pevarski! And with such mixed emotions, we confront the end of an era in Virginia damage prevention. Rick has truly been to great heights, literally parachuting and piloting hot air balloons, and figuratively as his leadership built VA811 into what it is today – and everything it will be in the future as all future growth will be built on the foundation he created.



Rick and his wife have bred Leonbergers (Leos), the gentle giants of the canine world, for almost 30 years.

Retirement is so often stereotypically tied to golfing – with the company giving an honored and valued team member a set of golf clubs at retirement. However, Rick's early years as a golf caddy led Rick to any and everything – except golf! Retirement is often linked with travel. Yet, Rick has already been to all seven continents – yes, even Antarctica. So, what will retirement look like for Rick? Well, your guess is as good as ours – but knowing Rick, it will most definitely be unique – and something amazing! Thank you, Rick, – thank you for all of your service to Virginia and carrying forward a message of both service and safety.



Rick participated in the U.S. Navy's Distinguished Visitor's Program.

OUTREACH & EVENTS

VA811 PARTNERS WITH VIRGINIA TECH TO DEVELOP ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

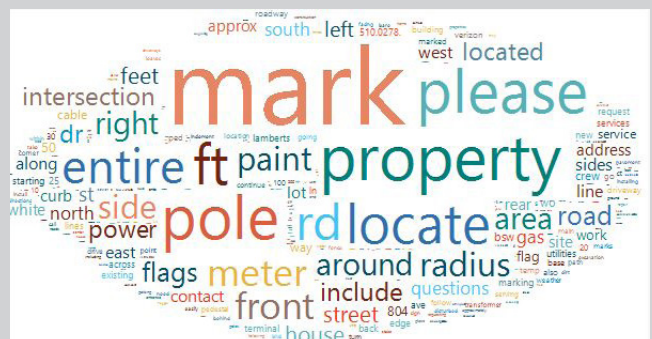
VA811 continues to work with Virginia Tech through its \$100,000.00 PHMSA Grant related to using artificial intelligence to enhance current QA/QC efforts. This grant will fund VA811 working with Virginia Tech’s Statistical Applications and Innovations Group (SAIG) in order to:

1. Determine a statistically valid sampling of tickets for auditing purposes;
2. Create an algorithm to use that identifies the level of risk each ticket has in regard to the probability it could contain an error, allowing QA/QC efforts to focus on high risk tickets.

SAIG is currently finishing Phase I of the project. The only remaining portion of Phase I in need of completion is the determination of a statistically valid random sampling of tickets. This final step should be completed by early to mid-June. SAIG has provided VA811 with a written summary of SAIG’s findings related to the analysis of VA811’s auditing process in relation to 15 DPS’ auditing 50 tickets and comparing their auditing codes with the codes a panel of experts assigned those tickets. The report also includes an analysis of the performance of a randomly determined group of the original DPS who, after roughly 3 weeks, audited the same tickets again in order to assess overall consistency.

Phase II of the grant has already begun as VA811 has shared a data dictionary related to the variables and ticket fields that will influence the development of the learning algorithm (AI). VA811 will also be sharing auditing data from the past three years, related to a total of roughly 1.3 million Web Ticket Entry tickets. SAIG has already provided a preliminary assessment of the data, working on fine tuning overall modeling and the creation of variables, associated risk for each variable, and variable weight. A threshold is also being determined as to when the algorithm will indicate the need for a QA/QC team member to evaluate the ticket.

Collectively, the near completion of Phase I and the work being done as part of Phase II represent a major step toward helping SAIG begin to create an auditing algorithm that will result in 100% of web tickets being audited. An interesting finding during this analysis of the web tickets is that one of the most used words in the excavation area description on web tickets is the word “Please.” This is reflected on a Word Cloud SAIG created to illustrate the more heavily used words. So, what can we learn from this? Something we already knew: the excavation community is incredibly polite! But now we have some data to prove it!



Word Cloud created by SAIG to illustrate the more heavily used words in web ticket entry.

OUTREACH & EVENTS

VIRTUAL DAMAGE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

VA811 hosted the first ever Virtual Damage Prevention Committee meeting on Friday, May 15. 60 persons participated in the meeting.

The meeting was a partnership effort between Dominion Energy, the Virginia State Corporation Commission, and VA811. After update presentations were provided by the SCC and VA811, the meeting was opened to attendees for questions and discussion.

While the meeting could not replace the interactions that stakeholders experience during an in-person damage prevention committee meeting, the session was well received by those who participated. Future virtual meetings may be held depending on the situation in Virginia with COVID-19.

The screenshot shows a GoToMeeting interface with a grid of 16 participants. The top bar includes the GoToMeeting logo, a 'REC' indicator, and the name 'alking: Mike Igo'. A 'View Everyone' dropdown menu is also visible. The participants are arranged in a 4x4 grid. The bottom row includes a control bar with icons for Mic, Camera, Screen, and Leave. The participants are:

Participant Name	Participant Name	Participant Name	Participant Name
Steve Light	John Pearson	Steven G	Dave Thompson
Dunnuck, Larry	Joseph Yost	Andrew "Damage Preven..."	Tiffani Weathers
Tracey Lamb	J Tully	Mark G.	Nikki Turpin
Tim Fannin	Suzanne Meurer	Lamarr Johnson	Trent Cox
Mike Igo	Madeline Harrover	Brothercott S	Keith Merritt

For the first time ever, the Damage Prevention Committee met virtually.

CONTACT CENTER SPOTLIGHT

EMPLOYEE OF THE FIRST QUARTER – GOLDEN SHOVEL AWARD!

In order to better recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of VA811 team members, Q1 witnessed the rebranding of the Employee of the Quarter Award. VA811 team members who excel in overall performance are now recognized quarterly with the Golden Shovel Award. In addition to receiving a monetary award and a trophy, the recipient of the Golden Shovel Award is recognized through an internally produced video highlighting the team member's accomplishments. The Manager of Marketing produces the video and distributes it both on Yammer, for internal viewing, and through VA811 social media outlets, including Facebook and Instagram, to promote VA811 workplace culture externally.



Janie having fun on 70's Day!

The team member awarded the Golden Shovel Award for Q1 2020 is Janie Sheperd. Janie serves VA811 as a Senior DPS and through her work as an internal ISO auditor. Janie played a notable and important role assisting with the March external ISO Audit, helping VA811 to remain ISO certified. Janie has a true passion for ISO and the role she plays auditing departments in relation to ISO. To learn more about Janie, and to view the new video format VA811 has implemented to celebrate team member successes, go to our YouTube page.



*Janie at 15th anniversary party (above).
and participating in customer service week (right).*



CONTACT CENTER SPOTLIGHT

EMPLOYEE OF THE FOURTH QUARTER & EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Christy Hale was named Employee of the Fourth Quarter of 2019. She has been with VA811 since April 2002 and works as a Senior Damage Prevention Specialist. Christy also works in Member Services.

The person(s) nominating Christy recommended stated:

“Christy has shown us multiple times how she is an amazing team player and takes the initiative to help solve issues that crop up with Member Services. She is Cathy Waldron’s main go-to person when she needs assistance, and to be honest, mine and Taska’s as well. When she sees a possible problem with our systems, she thoroughly investigates the issue and follows through until the issue is resolved, or work arounds are found. Recently, we have had several issues with the Alert Server, and she has helped us figure out the problems and kept Taska and I on the solution or work arounds for the problems, while allowing Cathy to work further on the solution to the issue. Christy has, and continues to test numerous systems that our company may be incorporating. Also, we have gained several new Senior DPS members, and she tries to field any questions they may have while they are training for their new positions. I am very grateful that Christy is part of the VA811 team, and I can’t imagine us without her.

To top it off, Christy was selected as the VA811 Employee of the Year for 2019. This is her second such recognition. Christy was also Employee of the Year for 2014. We are proud of the continued strong work that she performs in service to our stakeholders and to her co-workers.

Congratulations, Christy!



Rick Pevarski hands Christy a check for being named Employee of the Year.

NEW TO THE TEAM

MANAGER OF MARKETING

Over the course of the end of Q1- beginning of Q2- VA811 advertised for, interviewed, and hired a Manager of Marketing. This position serves on the Executive Team and will oversee all marketing efforts, including, but not limited to, social media, press releases, and the creation and distribution of physical marketing materials. The entire interview and hiring process, as well as onboarding, occurred remotely. The interview consisted of two parts. Part I involved candidates submitting a portfolio of their work and a video in which the candidates introduced themselves and shared what 811 means to them. Two candidates advanced to Part II, which involved a panel interview using GoToMeeting. Through this process, a successful candidate, Natalie Soucie, was identified and began onboarding on April 30.

A Philadelphia native, Natalie is a seasoned, three-time Emmy-award winning TV host, anchor, reporter, writer, and producer. She has extensive television experience, along with a background in marketing, sales, and public relations. She came to Roanoke in 2005 after working at various television stations around the country. She graduated from East Stroudsburg University in East Stroudsburg Pennsylvania before starting her television career.

Natalie began her career in Clarksburg, West Virginia at CBS affiliate WDTV as an anchor, reporter, and producer. She then spent 3 years in Johnson City, Tennessee as the Weekend Anchor/Reporter before becoming the Main Anchor at the ABC affiliate in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Natalie joined VA811 in April

In 2005, she took a Main Anchor role at the local Fox affiliate, WFXR in Roanoke, Virginia before changing careers and taking a job as the Director of Public Relations at Ferrum College. She spent several years in that role before she was called back into television. She was hired to create, host, and produce a local lifestyle/entertainment program called Daytime Blue Ridge for the NBC affiliate in Roanoke, Virginia. In this role, she wrote and produced scripts to coincide with current programming and sold products or ideas live on-air for station clients. She also created a popular travel and dining brand called "In a Day's Drive," where she would often be seen traveling the area focusing on the fun and interesting places to visit around the region. Three stories in that series won Regional Emmy awards, and several others were nominated. Natalie is very active in her community; for several years she served as a Board Member for the Roanoke Children's Theatre and has participated in numerous local events. She and her husband Paul, a teacher at Cave Spring High School, are the proud parents of two girls.