

# The Virginia 811 Dirt

WORKING AS ONE TO GET THE JOB DONE



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# IN THIS ISSUE

- Letter from the CEO ..... 2
- Newtin Portal User Interface ..... 4
- Ninjio Cybersecurity ..... 5
- That's a Wrap ..... 6
- Covering All the Bases ..... 7
- Office@Hand ..... 8
- Virginia 811 Fast Facts ..... 9
- VA Tech Capstone Project ..... 9
- Service and Safety for All ..... 10
- Golden Shovel Award ..... 12
- Employee Anniversaries ..... 13



## LETTER FROM THE CEO

# B. Scott Crawford

It's difficult to believe 2021 is coming to a close and that our last in-person Membership Meeting occurred two years ago. The Pandemic continues to plague businesses, creating an environment that must be flexible and open to new ways of operating. Virtual Membership Meetings have allowed us to still meet quarterly and participate in engaging and informative breakout sessions, learn about events occurring at Virginia 811, and listen to interesting keynote speakers. While breaking bread as a community cannot occur in virtual space, although virtual reality may even make that possible soon, we have sent gift cards to restaurants to participants to keep the food part of the meetings alive!

A host of individuals are behind the success of our virtual meetings. Some of the primary leaders in this effort include Virginia 811's Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Steve Light; Education and Marketing Supervisor, Nikki Turpin; and the famous (infamous?) Member Services Liaison, Cathy Waldron. Head of Talent, Jackie Stern, has played an essential role in spinning the prize wheel to identify door prize winners at each meeting. What a fantastic team to



seamlessly shift from in-person meetings to virtual, allowing important lines of communication with stakeholders to remain active!

In addition to continued virtual Membership Meetings, 2021 witnessed two exciting changes at Virginia 811. This year, a new department, the Quality Department, was officially created and launched under the leadership of the Head of Safety and Organizational Improvement, Kari Harris, and Manager of Data Analytics and QA/QC, Kenny Spade. They have been able to move a Senior DPS, Anna Holtz, into a supervisor role to help lead a new Web Ticket Entry auditing team. Through their efforts, more attention is now placed on WTE auditing efforts and working with stakeholders to address concerns about these tickets. In the coming weeks, this department will oversee the development of AI technology to audit 100% of WTE tickets. Virginia 811 has received a second PHMSA grant to use with Virginia Tech to continue to develop the AI auditing model, refine the model, and integrate machine learning capabilities in the model. The goal is to have a fully developed, machine learning AI model examining all WTE tickets, directing tickets with possible errors to the new WTE auditors.

Virginia 811 was incredibly fortunate this year to recruit Shana Linthicum as Head of Service and Communications. Shana joined the Virginia 811 team to oversee IT and Operations but has also now provided leadership for the Marketing Department. In the few months she has been with Virginia 811, Shana's leadership has produced a vendor assessment form and procedure, a cybersecurity

roadmap, a cybersecurity strategic plan, a systems interdependencies matrix, the facilitation, and postmortem analysis of drills related to essential systems, and the launch of Ninjio, a cybersecurity training platform, which is described in more detail in this issue of The Dirt. Shana has also restructured the Marketing Department to allow for more cross-departmental interaction and support, as well as further facilitate the department's outreach to stakeholders. Nikki Turpin is now overseeing public outreach through Liaisons and supporting education efforts, working closely with Steve Light, Cathy Waldron, and QA/QC Supervisor, Anna Holtz. Kim Swope is leveraging her impressive marketing talents through her promotion to Communications and Brand Supervisor where she oversees and coordinates marketing initiatives.

While I'll miss seeing everyone in person in Roanoke during this December Membership Meeting, I'm glad we will all continue to be together - at least virtually.

I hope you enjoy learning more about what Virginia 811 has been doing this quarter in the articles that follow. Let us look forward to 2022 and the new ways we will be interacting, which will surely include virtual, hybrid, and in-person!

- Benjamin Scott Crawford  
President & CEO  
Virginia 811

# In the Pipeline

## New Newtin Portal User Interface Being Developed



An exciting new user interface is in the works for Virginia 811's Newtin portal web page.

Over the last quarter, the Virginia 811 Stakeholder Engagement team has worked closely with our damage prevention partners to audit and update our current page.

As a result, a new and improved interface portal page emerged. This page is more user friendly and also offers a better user experience than its predecessor.

Some of the most important features include the addition of shortcuts that allow users to easily access ticket entry functions. A second feature introduces a dashboard widget which is equipped with real-time Virginia 811 ticket stats that are generated daily.

The new Newtin portal page is currently in beta testing and expected to go live next quarter.

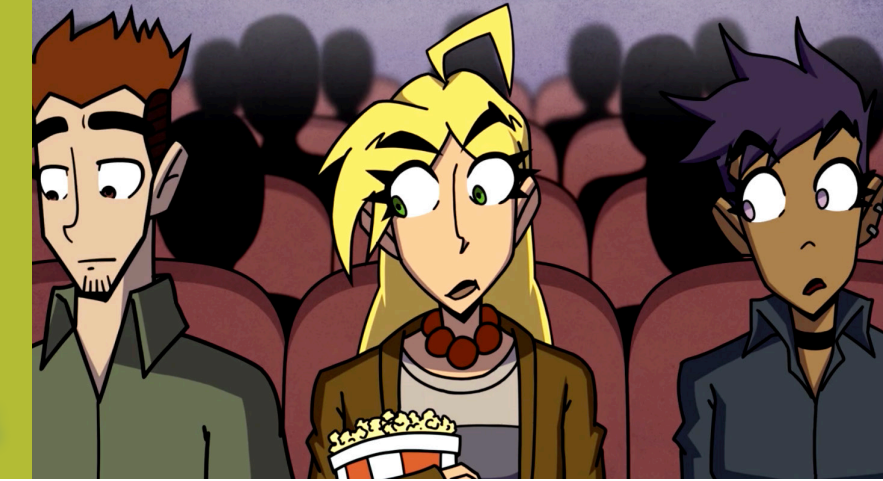


**COMING SOON!**



# Animation Meets Micro-Learning

BEHAVIOR CHANGING CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS



Ignoring cybersecurity is a business risk regardless of how big or small a business may be. Increasingly, nefarious players are targeting a growing number of companies through a host of cyber strategies. From phishing, to pharming, to malware, to man in the middle, to denial of service, to ransomware, and the list goes on, businesses must be vigilant as they protect systems and data, especially as a larger number of individuals are working remotely. The Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack is just one notable cybersecurity issue that hit our industry this past year, and it's a reminder that cyber threats are real and can target any business at any time.

While firewalls, dual authentication, and consistent updating of passwords are all essential in the fight against cyber threats, a key part of mitigating cyber risk falls back on training. An untrained employee base opens a window of opportunity for cyberattacks to find success. While Virginia 811 has continued to develop system-based measures to protect data and operations, it is now launching a unique training program through Ninjio.

Ninjio approaches cybersecurity training with two primary strategies in mind. First, rather than subjecting employees to annual cybersecurity training that is typically two or more hours in length, Ninjio's model involves content that is anywhere from 4-6 minutes in length being sent

to a company's team monthly. Through this approach, cybersecurity is a focus throughout the year, allowing each content release to focus on a finely defined cybersecurity issue. This not only reinforces the importance of cybersecurity, as it is released continuously throughout the year, it allows participants to gain a better understanding of content as they avoid being exposed to numerous themes and topics over an hours long period.

The second strategy is what really sets Ninjio's cybersecurity training apart from other options. Rather than a video experience where an expert in the field lectures participants about cyber threats and how to avoid them, with typically a PowerPoint style list of one term after another appearing in the video, Ninjio presents monthly anime style cartoons that are story driven. The stories focus on actual cyberattacks that are current and that present those events in an engaging cartoon format. These are highly professional cartoons, written by writers who have contributed to 72 episodes of shows such as CSI: NY and Hawaii 5-O. Hollywood voice talents, such as Jon Lovitz, add to the overall quality of the cartoons, creating engaging content to hold participants' attention.

Following each monthly cartoon, participants complete a quiz related to the content covered. A dashboard allows the administrator to monitor participation and overall understanding, which the administrator can then use to send additional training materials to team members who are not passing the quizzes. Participants also receive follow up material that contains links to articles related to the actual event the monthly cartoon portrays, as well as an engaging infographic highlighting key takeaways from each cartoon. The platform also allows each participant to add, at no cost, up to seven family members to receive this content monthly.

Virginia 811 will begin to launch Ninjio in December 2021. For those interested in learning more, be sure to check out Ninjio's website here: [Ninjio.com](https://ninjio.com). Also, feel free to contact Virginia 811's Head of Service and Communications, Shana Linthicum, at [slinthicum@va811.com](mailto:slinthicum@va811.com) if you have any additional questions. Together, sharing cybersecurity resources and solutions, we can all help undermine this risk.



NINJIO Cybersecurity Awareness Training Working from Home featuring actor Jon Lovitz.

# THAT'S A WRAP!

## Virginia 811 Finalizes Vehicle Branding

In a sea of nondescript cars, a well-designed, wrapped vehicle is sure to stand out. It's the one-off that makes a branded vehicle so noticeable to people on the road. Plus, it makes a person's commute more interesting. It's estimated that, on average, a vehicle that drives 15,000 miles a year will reach 9 million people.

And the Virginia 811 vehicles are bound to receive more attention when they hit the road next week with their new wraps! We're currently putting the final touches on our Virginia 811 car and display truck with Pro Mobile Graphics in Salem, Virginia, and we'll be hitting the road next week sporting our new look.

It's a major win when an organizations' marketing creates a strong brand identity - and our Virginia 811 branded vehicles are a gift that keeps on giving. The more we hit the road across Virginia, the more visible the Virginia 811 brand will be.

If you see us on your travels, be sure to give us a honk!



# Covering All the Bases.

*And continuing to grow!*



COVID-19 hasn't slowed down operations at Virginia 811!

In March 2020, we swiftly and seamlessly migrated from in-office to remote team members. We not only proved we could operate without interruption... we are successfully still doing so.

And we are growing! In March 2021, we hired five new team members and brought back several former team members to manage our steady contact volume. In November of 2021, an additional five members joined Virginia 811.

Our geographical base is also expanding within Virginia and beyond. While the majority of our Damage Prevention Specialist team is based in and around Roanoke, Virginia, we also have team members in other areas of the commonwealth: Palmyra, Gloucester, Staunton, Rocky Mount, and

Collinsville. Areas outside of Virginia include North and South Carolina.

Virginia 811 is supplying generators to several of our Damage Prevention Specialists with varied Internet Service Providers in Salem, Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and Troutville, Virginia which is an added resource for business continuity.

As an organization that provides a critical safety need and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days week, the statewide expansion and our business continuity team allows Virginia 811 to remain resilient and redundant in the event of a local disaster, an extreme weather event, or an outage in a particular region.



## Welcome Virginia 811's Newest Team Members



Vanessa Dye



Karen Wiseman



Mark Raleigh



Samantha Young



Jessie Layman

# OFFICE AT HAND

## Dedication to Safety Just Got More Resilient

We have a commitment to resiliency and redundancy so that our Damage Prevention Specialists are ready to receive calls. It's imperative that Virginia 811 agents are able to receive calls and be certain that excavation notices are created and sent to its member utilities. This, of course, protects our members' utilities and the excavators who are digging around underground utilities.

We currently have multiple on-premise phone switches and telecom communication circuits with built in redundancy, including a disaster site located at the Higher Education Center in downtown Roanoke. But what if an interruption to this well-designed system prevented calls from reaching our Damage Prevention Specialists? How would we continue to protect our communities?

To help prevent a service interruption, Virginia 811 has implemented a cloud-based phone switch that allows Damage Prevention Specialists to login using their computer and headset. This product is known as Office@Hand. The Office@Hand cloud-based phone switch was configured with a single incoming queue to handle all calls from 811 and 800-552-7001. The switch can easily be brought online utilizing AT&T's web portal in the event of a disaster scenario.

Office@Hand was installed and tested with the help of Senior Damage Prevention Specialist, Kerry Bradley and it will roll out to all agents soon. This application aligns with our mission: "Passion to Serve, Dedication to Safety".



## FAST FACTS

+6.6%

Ticket Volume YTD\*

-1.4%

Call Volume YTD\*

+2.3%

Web Ticket Entry YTD\*

+21.3%

Single Address Ticket YTD\*

+22.2%

Ticket Revision Express YTD\*

69.7%

% of Internet Originated Tickets YTD

\*Compared to Same Period Last Year

## Virginia Tech Capstone Project

### Partnering Together for Stronger Outcomes

Virginia 811 is proud to work with the Virginia Tech Capstone Partners once again.

Several Virginia Tech students are working on whether or not there is a statistically valid correlation between Virginia 811 marketing practices and overall ticket volume, first time callers, brand recognition, academy participation and reduction in 17 A violations. Their work will examine specific marketing practices such as digital marketing campaigns, social media,

public service announcements, promotional materials, and display truck events. By analyzing all this marketing data, Virginia 811 can fine-tune their marketing efforts to determine the impact and success of marketing activities.

Virginia 811 continuously looks for innovative ways to increase the effectiveness of all that we do to better protect those we serve. We're grateful to Virginia Tech for helping us achieve this goal.



# Continuous Learning

## The Key to Providing Service and Safety for All

Virginia 811 is committed to creating a culture that provides team members with professional growth opportunities! Team members are given the option to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to help them visualize and express their professional goals and develop an action plan for reaching their own objectives. Team members attend training throughout the year to help them reach these goals. Virginia 811 utilizes the SkillPath LMS that offers a variety of platforms for learning centered on professional development. Topics include, “How to be a Successful Remote Employee”, “Training for New Supervisors”, “The Top 10 Management Survival Skills for First-Time Supervisors”, and “The Supervisors’ Guide to Giving Direction, Feedback and Criticism”. Virginia 811 will continue to offer training through

this venue throughout the upcoming year.

In addition, Virginia 811 partners with local learning schools like Virginia Western Community College, School of Career and Corporate Training. A Business Writing and Email Etiquette class is available for all Damage Prevention Specialists (DPS) and support staff. The curriculum includes identifying and demonstrating effective and appropriate formatting and how to avoid common mistakes and locate errors. This course also includes the basic rules of grammar and punctuation and the five canons of rhetoric; what is invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Future classes will include “Innovative Mentorship”, and combined learning that includes “Neuroplasticity: Psychological Impact for Personal & Organizational Resilience”,

“Augmented Reality & Artificial Intelligence”, “Cognition Based Communication”, and “Intrinsic Motivation & Self-Determination”.



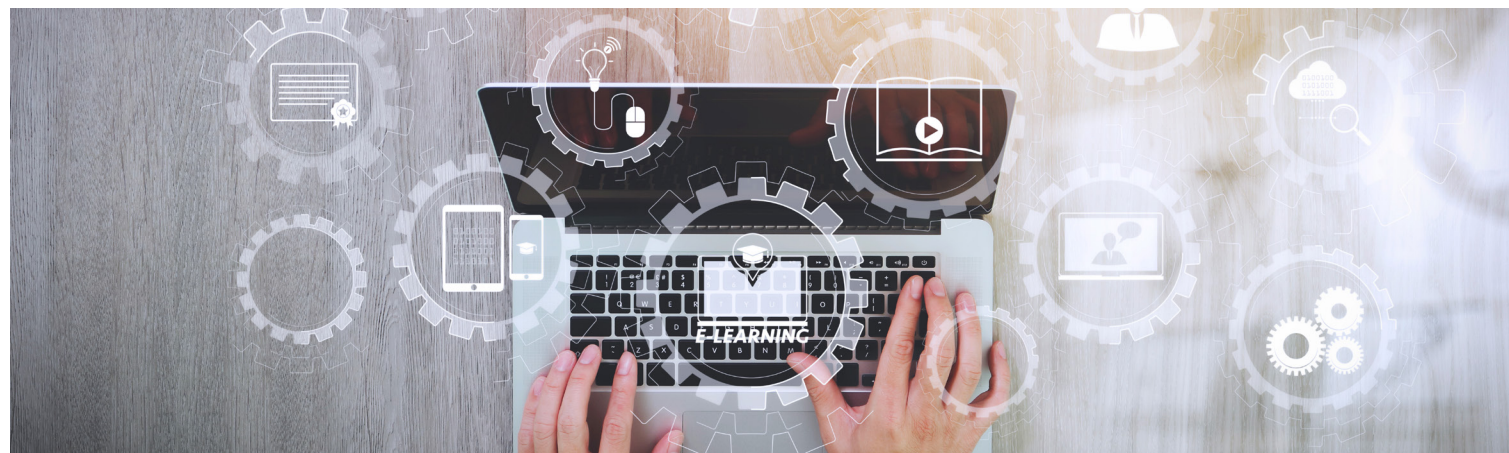
To enhance their skills, the GIS Analyst II and the support team are taking GIS Fundamentals through the University of Richmond, School of Professional & Continuing Studies. This course includes the 5 parts of GIS (hardware, software, data, people and methods, data types); raster/vector, projections, metadata, finding/evaluating data, data storage (geodatabases, shapefiles) and Web GIS. Future training will include GIS Advanced Certificate with key topics that include spatial analysis, spatial statistics, GIS scripting, advanced geoprocessing and remote sensing.

In addition, team members are encouraged to participate in group discussions centered on a specific book, article, or TED Talk. Recently, a group of team members read and reviewed the book, “The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth” and are currently reading and reviewing the book, “Leading With Questions.” These sessions

provide opportunities for team members to periodically meet and discuss content which may generate new ways of approaching business needs.

Attending conferences and webinars virtually also enhances learning among Virginia 811 team members. For example, the ICMI Conference (International Customer Management Institute) provided insight into the post-pandemic workplace and workforce by outlining what employees want including hybrid schedules, mental health awareness, work-life balance, and competitive compensation. The conference also covered ways to improve hiring and retention which proved helpful during the most recent hiring campaign.

Finally, Virginia 811 is always committed to providing a safe work environment for the purpose of education, compliance with the law, and risk mitigation by providing training through the ADP LMS self-directed learning. Recently team members participated in “Preventing Discrimination & Harassment Training” which included sexual harassment, discrimination, bystander intervention, and diversity inclusion training. All team members have completed the required training to ensure everyone’s safety and wellbeing.



# GOLDEN SHOVEL AWARD WINNER

## Marty Mitchem



Virginia 811 2021 Golden Shovel Award Recipient 3rd Quarter

Marty has worked at Virginia 811 since 2002. She currently works on the Member Services team in the Virginia 811 Operations Department

Meet Marty Mitchem, a charter team member who was hired by Virginia 811 on July 13th, 2002. She has worn many hats at Virginia 811 and been a part of numerous teams, including a Damage Prevention Specialist and a Senior Damage Prevention Specialist where she worked on the Help Desk, as a Web Ticket Coordinator, and currently as part of the Member Services team in the Operations Department.

Marty is always willing to support and assist our external and internal customers with any questions or requests they bring her way. Previously on the Help Desk, Marty worked with Cathy Waldron on projects for Member Services. This proved to be perfect training for her current role as a member of the Member Services team. She currently trains their newest member, Gail Biggs, and is doing a wonderful job coaching her in the many areas and projects of Member Services.

Thank you for all the talents you bring to our team, Marty. You continue to do great things for Virginia 811 year after year!

“ Marty jumps in on projects no matter what the challenge. When she begins a project, she sticks with it until completion, and it’s always done accurately. ”



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Team Members Celebrating Their Service to Virginia 811 This Quarter

Together they bring a combined 23 years of experience to the Virginia 811 team.

### Shannon Bishop

10/27/2014 | 7 Years of Service

### Kayla DeHart

10/27/2014 | 7 Years of Service

### B. Scott Crawford

12/19/2016 | 5 Years of Service

### Devian Trevey-Boitnott

10/4/2017 | 4 Years of Service

## Happy Anniversary to All!

We applaud their dedication and service to Virginia 811.

