



DAMAGE PREVENTION PROFESSIONAL

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SPOTLIGHT:

Mapping & Technology

- // GPS Accuracy Under the Gun
- // Aircraft Surveillance of Pipeline Threats
- // As-Built Surveys: 3-D Scanning

NEW MEXICO'S SYSTEM:

Damage Reporting & Enforcement Tracking

ONE CALL ASSOCIATIONS:

New Guidelines for Government Agencies

LOCATE RODEO:

The Olympics of the Locating Industry



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EAST SYRACUSE NY 13057-9691
5063 BRITTONFIELD PKWY
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• Dig Safely New York's Mobile Interactive Damage Prevention Display Vehicle

/ BY KEVIN HOPPER



First of its kind: interactive underground damage prevention mobile exhibit.

AN INDUSTRY FIRST! There was a time not so long ago, when explaining the existence of the underground utility lines and the need to protect them by calling 811 before you dig was very textbook in approach, as the process lacked the visual and hands-on learning aspects necessary by many to really retain the message.

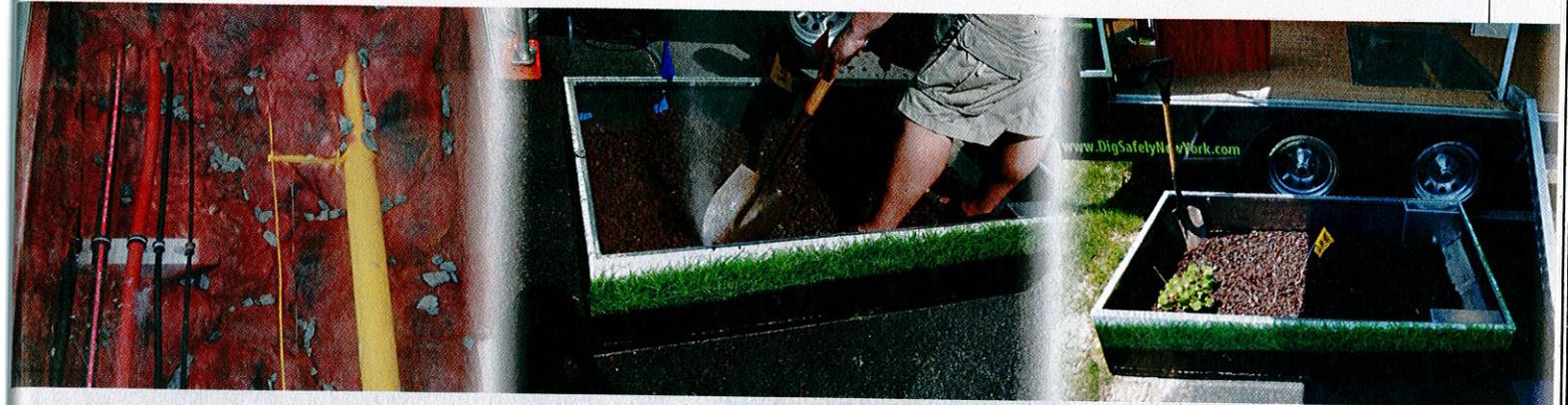
Like many others involved in damage prevention education, our approach was very similar to what had been done over the years. We would roll out our typical trade show display with banner stands and signage supporting the safe digging message. The difficulty has been engaging the audience in damage prevention with a handout or brochure. Just how effective are these materials in demonstrating the importance of safe digging? What impact do these materials have in creating a lasting impression?

In contrast, many electric companies have overhead electric live line

demonstrations to really catch the attention of an audience at a trade show, fair, or other venue. If you have watched a demonstration, you will remember the story of the squirrel who ventured too close to the electric line. The question was how do we make the underground come alive and create those lasting impressions? That challenge was the goal and inspiration behind the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's 2011 State Damage Prevention Program grant submission by Dig Safely New York, Inc.

Dig Safely New York, Inc. proposed the fabrication of an interactive underground damage prevention mobile exhibit, the first of its kind in the damage prevention industry. This colorful and educational moving display is providing the underground damage prevention industry with a creative and innovative approach to damage prevention awareness. It is comprised of many attention-drawing features, such as branded bill-



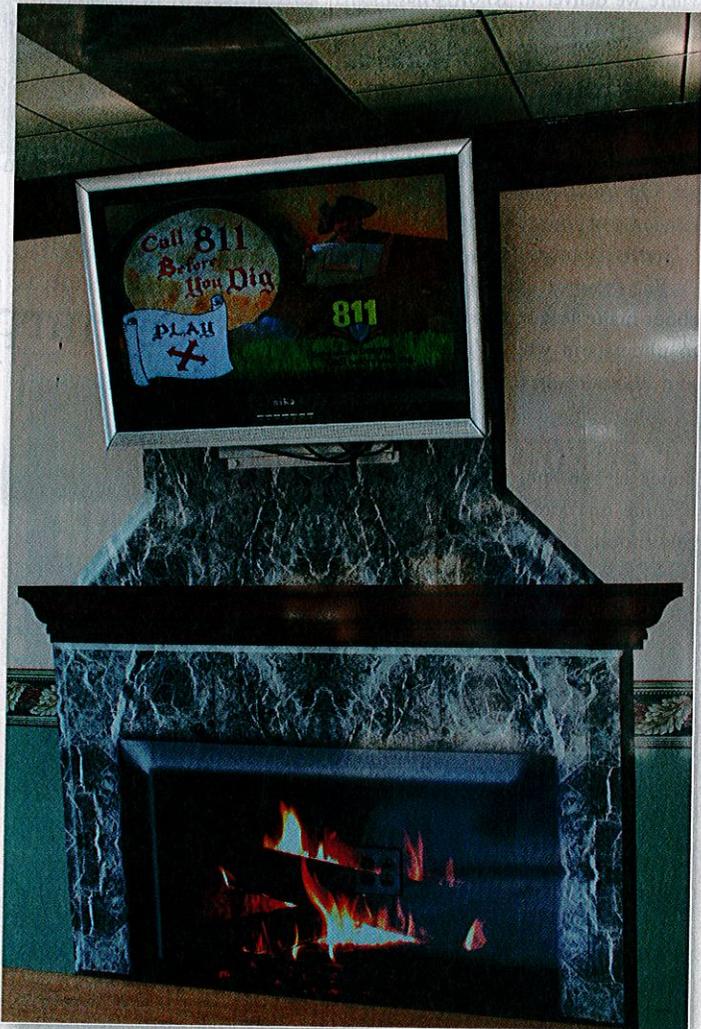


Above Left: Clear view of buried utilities found in a common trench. Above Center & Right: Custom interactive digging experience. Bottom Right: Living room look includes LCD TV for video presentations.

boards and a custom interactive digging experience, which highlights the consequences and inconveniences of unsafe digging. The display provides the opportunity to engage the audience and put a shovel in someone's hands. The person holding the shovel immediately learns the consequences of hitting an underground line if they fail to call before they dig. The digging area is set up with a line of pressurized air or water to simulate the hitting of a gas line or water line. Either can be released as soon as the shovel is put in the ground, creating a memorable digging experience. Additionally, the exhibit is set up to look like the inside of someone's living room. The display also demonstrates the inconveniences of being without cable or electricity, as the main power to the trailer can be shut off or the television can go static if they dig into the associated utility line.

The exhibit also assists the audience in recognizing some of the common components which indicate the existence of underground utilities. A gas meter, electric meter and communication service installations are included in the exhibit as part of our exterior home wall. The display also provides the ability to actually visualize the underground infrastructure in the interactive floor. The floor of the exhibit is recessed and covered with a clear acrylic, which allows the viewer to stand directly above the buried utilities found in a common trench. The visual experience reinforces the importance of having underground utilities marked.

To expand the learning experience, a large LCD TV is mounted to the back wall to allow for video presentations. Utilization of the mobile exhibit trailer has allowed for a more interactive and hands-on experience with underground damage prevention. This display vehicle has already been traveling across New York State and engaging audiences in an unforgettable educational experience. An individual, having the ability to see firsthand what can happen, walks away with the lesson of Call 811 Before You Dig. The days of just textbook learning about underground utility lines have evolved into this mobile exhibit experience. I would like to thank Purdy Built by UPSCO for the complete fabrication of the trailer, Voss Signs for creating the visual experience with the trailer wrap, and especially the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration for their assistance in bringing this idea to completion. **DP**



Check out the Dig Safely New York's Interactive Damage Prevention Display Vehicle on our YouTube Channel, www.youtube.com/DigSafelyNewYork811#p/u.

Kevin Hopper is the Operations Manager for Dig Safely New York. He can be reached at kshopper@digsafelynewyork.com or 315-437-7394 www.digsafelynewyork.com