



If you've read this column before, you know that *Deeds* is the "Focus on Underground Focus" feature. We tell you what the owners of this magazine are trying to do to improve damage prevention. But trying is not enough; we will not consider ourselves successful unless we actually improve damage prevention. How can we tell if we're improving damage prevention without clearly stated objectives and a means by which we, and you the reader, can chart our progress? So then, I think we need to do three things. First, we need to recap the first five *Deeds* columns. Secondly, we need to begin construction of that list of clearly stated objectives. Lastly, we need to begin thinking about how to measure our progress, creating a scorecard of sorts. Below is a brief recap of the central opinion posed in each of this year's *Deeds* columns:

March: Underground facility owners need to make greater use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) when performing one-call locates. One-call policies need to be more flexible in order to accommodate the use of GPR.

April: Underground facility owners need to strive for "locatability" of non-metallic systems for the entire life of such systems. Proper installation and subsequent testing of tracer wires is one way to achieve long-lasting locatability.

May: Locating is not just the responsibility of the locator. It is also the responsibility of the excavator. *Underground Focus* initiates the use of the word "designating" in place of the word "locating" so that locating becomes descriptive of the practice of obtaining "exact" buried utility location information, not "approximate" buried utility location information.

June: In some instances, the "locating and marking" component of the Common Ground Alliance's Best Practices that deals with pipe and cable locating instruments is misleading. Promoting accurate and easily understood information about pipe and cable locating instruments is a challenging, yet necessary task for all involved in damage prevention.

July/August: Subsurface utility engineering (SUE) has a lot to offer the damage prevention industry, or so it seems. A project to create an extensive "glossary of terms" may be just the ticket to find out who really needs whom.



What are our objectives? For one, we want to create educational products that make it easy for people to understand things that may not be so easily understood. We aim to identify and promote practices that enhance long-range locatability. Furthermore, we advocate the increased use of pipe and cable locating instruments at dig sites. We are behind efforts to record the exact locations of buried utilities and make that information accessible to engineers and excavators. Finally, we are preparing to be ready to participate in research and development projects that address the aforementioned objectives.

Benchmarking our success with these objectives may be a bit subjective, as is damage prevention itself. When something doesn't get damaged, is it because we did our job right or is it because there was no excavation near underground lines? I know we need something to chart our progress, but frankly, I'm not sure how to do it. Maybe the answer will become obvious over time.

There's one project that we have been working on for several years. I'd like to take you along on a bit of a tour. The first photo on the facing page is of my partner, Jon Robilotta. He's digging a hole over a gas line which I had just marked. We are working a few blocks from our office in Manteno, Ill. Normally, Jon does the line tracing and I dig all the holes. But, Jon doesn't know how to use a camera so we momentarily switched positions. Jon wants to be promoted to digger, but he must first put in more time tracing lines. After all, good things take time.

The next photo shows Jon programming a marker ball. After we locate a utility line by hand-digging, we record the depth of the line and then transfer that information along with line attributes to the marker ball. As the last photograph details, we place the marker ball over the top of the utility line and then we fill-in the hole. We subsequently record where we have placed marker balls. We place balls close enough to one another so that the buried utility line can essentially be traced solely by finding the marker balls.

I really believe that we're spending our time getting ready for some sort of future research project that could one day revolutionize the

way we protect buried utilities. We are not the ones that can dream up new technology designed to protect buried utilities. But, hey, we can dig the holes. And the best place to test new technology is where the holes have already been dug. If you know of anyone that needs block after block of precise utility location information, send them our way. We'll be waiting. **UF**

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