

VIEW, TOO

by Mike Parilac, Publisher

A New Column Dedicated to Tracking Business Ethics in Damage Prevention

In terms of location, underground pipe and cables are immutable. They will be present at a dig site or they won't. Some will and some won't. Fact is, they exist precisely where they are at this very moment and will be there for the rest of our lifetimes. Those underground pipes and cables are going to be there whether you or I know about them or not.

For those fans of the old Monte Python television series, you'll remember the sketch about the Leaning Tower of Pisa; as long as everyone believed it would not fall, it did not fall. The second someone verbally cast doubt on the ability of the tower to remain in constant lean, it began to move earthward. The tower stopped moving when the doubter retracted their words.

I invite you to consider if our current damage prevention methodology isn't at least a little bit like the Monte Python sketch; don't doubt what we're doing because, as you can see, the Tower hasn't fallen. Many in the damage prevention industry seem to conveniently overlook the most basic truth of damage prevention: underground pipes and cables are going to be located precisely where they are now whether the excavator or facility owner is aware of this location or not. Believing you do all you can to prevent damage because your company meets the requirements of your state statute is merely sticking to the Monte Python-type script.

With all people sticking to the script, there will never be a long-term reduction in avoidable utility damage. That sought-after

reduction will only occur when people do MORE than what they are required to do. I call "doing more" an example of a person or company exercising business ethics in damage prevention; doing it because it's the right thing to do.

As *Underground Focus* increases its industry commentary in future issues, expect this column to feature examples of business ethics in damage prevention. Additionally, expect us to feature examples of business ethics nowhere to be found. In the first year, I suspect you'll see a lot more of the latter. After all, there's a difference between operating legally and operating ethically.

You might be saying, "It's easy to for *Underground Focus* to sit there and cast judgment upon the deeds of others. You don't own any facilities and you don't excavate. You don't understand what we have to deal with on a daily basis. You don't have to come up with funding. You have no budget. You don't have to deal with legal departments. You have zero risk." I understand and you'd be mostly right. Except for that risk part, though.

What do we risk? We risk being misunderstood. We risk alienating some of our readers. We risk being overly sympathetic to excavators. We risk being overly sympathetic to the utilities. We risk being viewed as all talk and no action. And you know what? I think we can control that last risk. To this end, we will produce yet another new *Underground Focus* feature, a "what we're doing about it" column.

So...back to that business ethics thing. Why don't more cities locate sewer laterals? Why don't utilities produce better maps for locating purposes? Why don't more excavators see locating as a responsibility they share with facility owners? Stay tuned. **UF**

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