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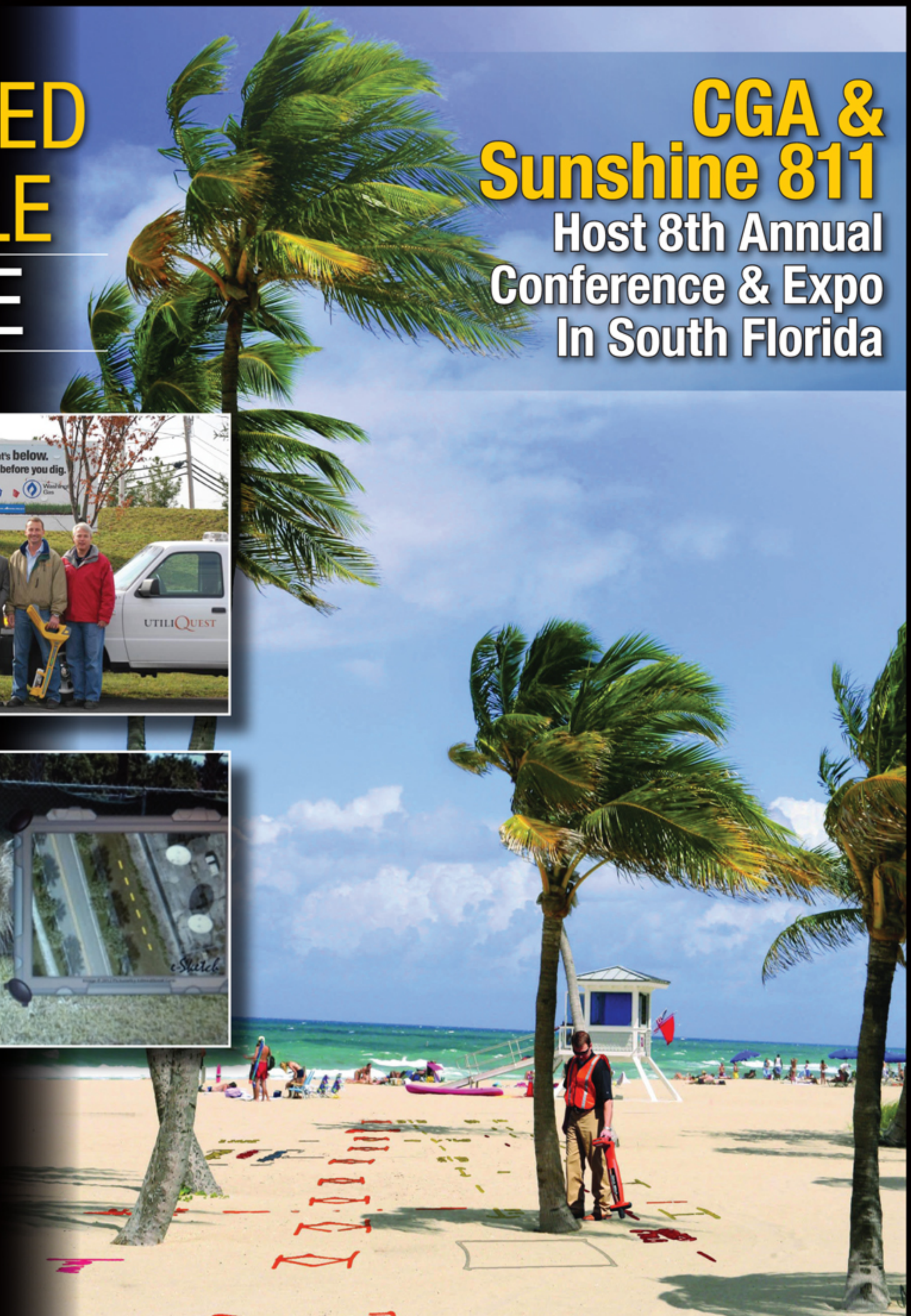
# DAMAGE PREVENTION PROFESSIONAL

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UTILIQUEST



# LOCATING BY: UTILIQUEST

## Damage Prevention Beyond the Locate: *"It Ain't Just the Paint"*

/ BY GARY BOKELMANN

In the wake of a series of high profile incidents that claimed numerous lives and caused millions of dollars in property damage, utility operators these days are under more pressure than ever to prevent damage to their underground facilities. Not only must natural gas providers comply with the federally mandated Distribution Integrity Management Program, but they also must meet increasingly stringent state and local damage prevention standards designed to protect lives and property. Likewise, electrical and telecommunications providers are under regulatory pressure to improve safety and reliability.

For contract locators, this increased focus on damage prevention presents both challenges and opportunities. In addition to creating demand for new and more efficient locating technologies, it also leads to increased interest from utilities in establishing stronger working relationships with contract locate professionals.

"We actually are very optimistic about the future of the industry and the long-term focus on quality and damage prevention," says Dennis Tarosky, President of UtiliQuest, an Atlanta-based contract locating company serving major utilities throughout the United States. "For one thing, new technologies allow companies like ours to achieve greater operating efficiency and quality."

"But it's much more than technology alone," he added. "What's equally significant is the ability to develop closer working partnerships with our utility customers. Rather than just performing a locate, we're working with utilities at building true partnerships in damage prevention."

### Looking Beyond Price to Total Value

In addition to responding to regulatory pressures, a growing number of utilities also recognize they can enjoy long-term financial benefits through a quality relationship with their locating professionals.

"You have to look beyond the contract initial price and understand the total cost and the total value," said Scott Brown, Manager of Damage Prevention for Washington Gas, a UtiliQuest client for over 15 years. "There are a lot of positive trends we are seeing by building partnerships between the locating company and the operating company, as well as with other stakeholders in damage prevention, including excavators and regulators."

"Partnership amongst stakeholders has been the cornerstone of Virginia's program since the early 1990s," notes Massoud Tahamtani, Director of the Division of Utility and Railroad Safety for State Corporation Commission, the regulatory agency in Virginia. This partnership is active in many different forms and venues including the monthly meetings of Virginia's Damage Prevention Advisory Committee, which is made up of representatives of all stakeholders. When issues arise that impact the overall program,



Left to Right: Scott Brown, Manager of Damage Prevention for Washington Gas; Doug Staebler, Vice President of Operations, Engineering, Construction and Safety for Washington Gas; Thurman Smith, Vice President Northeast Operations for UtiliQuest; and Mel Huey, Director of Infrastructure, Integrity and Compliance for Washington Gas.

they are brought before this committee for discussion. Resolutions of issues, including revisions to the law, commission rules, policies and procedures, are recommended after full participation of all involved.

In the case of Washington Gas, which serves more than one million residential, commercial and industrial customers in Washington, D.C. and surrounding areas, this partnership between locator and utility has produced measurable results. Over the past two decades, Washington Gas has seen its system-wide damage ratio from excavation-related accidents drop from 8.45 claims per 1,000 locates in 1989, to 1.48 claims per 1,000 in 2012 (See chart on next page.)

"When you look at the positive trend, it's obvious that the locator-operator relationship is working," Brown said. "There's a lot of training and awareness that takes place, and that's where the partnership between all the stakeholders is very important."

"This is a perfect example of one plus one equals three – instead of two," said Tracy Townsend, Division Head of Safety Compliance, Construction Operations, System Integrity & Technology at Washington Gas. "Washington Gas and UtiliQuest continue to partner and succeed in driving our damage ratio to below 'one' in the commonwealth of Virginia."

"Through continued focus on process improvement, alignment of resources and leveraging of technology, the company continues to enjoy a leadership role in the damage prevention arena," she added. "Preventing damages is an integral facet to operating a safe and reliable gas system and is paramount in maintaining employee safety."

Another successful UtiliQuest partnership is with Dominion Virginia Power, which provides electric service to about 2.4 million customer accounts in Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.





Source: Washington Gas

"To me, having a long-term relationship with UtiliQuest is very important in the state of Virginia," said Andrew Brooks, Manager of Damage Prevention at Dominion. "Northern Virginia is a high volume area, but UtiliQuest's leadership and the ways they approach this business have helped us keep our damage ratio below one damage per thousand tickets. UtiliQuest is doing a lot of things with technology that gets us to that level."

### The Right Relationship – Going Beyond the Locate

In all successful partnerships, Tarosky notes, clear and continuing communication is essential. "There's been a lot of initiative on the part of Washington Gas over the last few years in excavator and property owner education," Tarosky said. "That includes explaining to the public 'What is a One Call ticket?' and 'Why do you call before you dig?' And from an excavator standpoint, it means educating them on safe dig practices. There's been a commitment from Washington Gas to getting that message out."

That need for clear communication extends down to the individual technician as well, added Mel Huey, Director of Infrastructure Integrity and Compliance for Washington Gas. "We've seen UtiliQuest's technicians develop a sense of ownership of our facilities," Huey explained. "So they'll talk to an excavator to say, 'Here's the right way to do things and here's what to do if you run into a problem,' rather than just focusing on completing the locate."

In one instance, Brown and Huey recalled a passing UtiliQuest technician noticed crews working at a Virginia jobsite where he knew Washington Gas facilities were at risk. "Even though no one had called for a dig ticket, he took the initiative and stopped the crew from drilling on top of one of our transmission mains," said Brown. "He prevented what could have been a terrible event."

"That's what we mean by a sense of ownership," added Huey. "It means going beyond just performing the locate. Or, as I say, 'It ain't just the paint.'"

Citing another example, Tarosky recalled a concerted damage prevention effort by UtiliQuest and Washington Gas involving an excavator that had long been a leading source of damage claims. "We came together, identified an excavator that was high risk, and by working together we were able to develop an open and transparent relationship which allowed us to go in and train his folks and produce results," Tarosky explained.

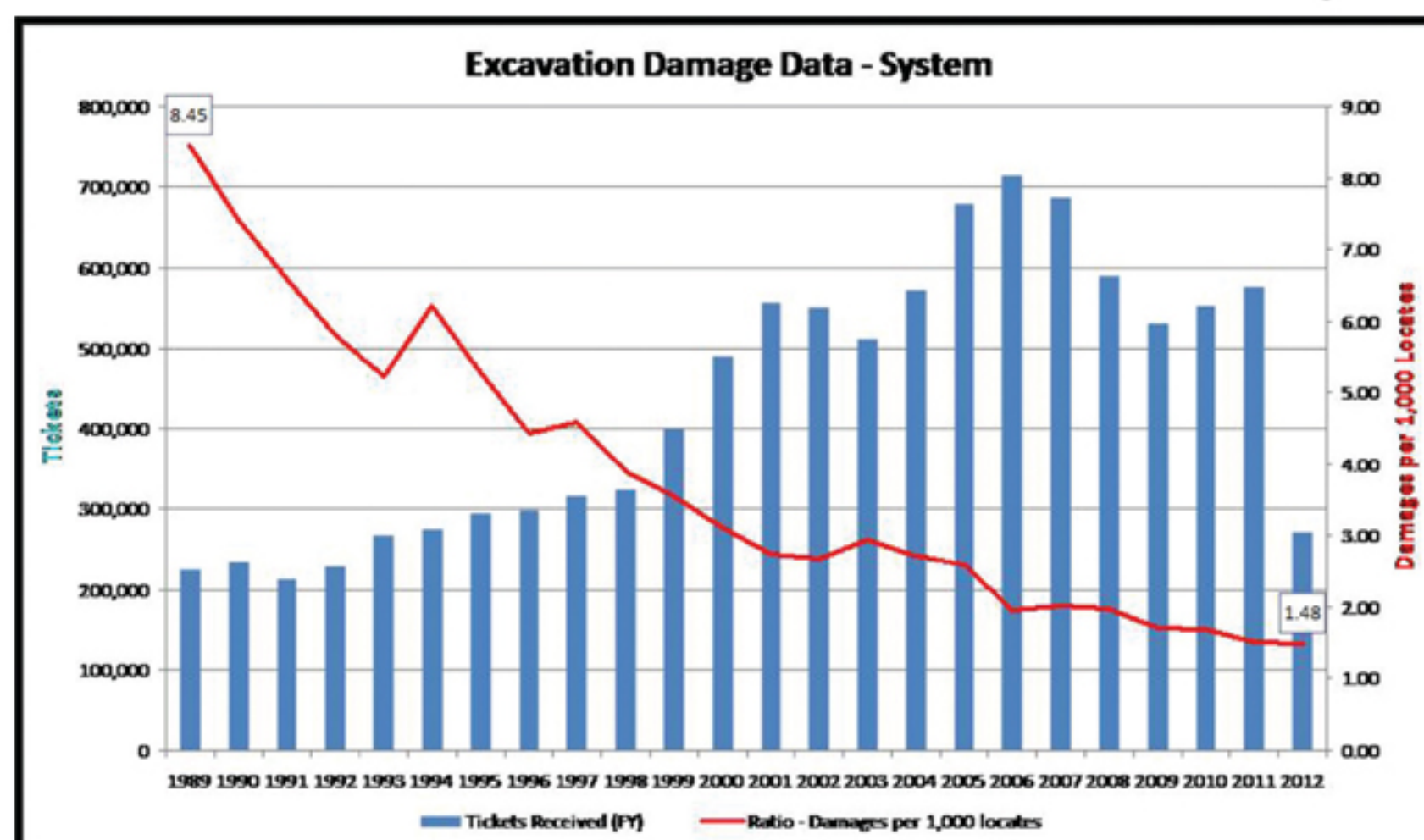
"We have already seen this excavator reduce their damage ratio by half in just one year," noted Brown. "That's the result of partnering, monthly meetings with the folks, and developing trust that when the excavator calls for help somebody will come and help him in a timely fashion."

"None of that is locating," he added. "That's all beyond locating."

### The Right Tools

As essential as it is to develop a sense of ownership and partnership among all stakeholders, it is also important to support the relationship with the right tools.

One of the nine elements of an effective damage prevention program



contained in the Pipeline Inspection, Protection, Enforcement and Safety Act of 2006 is having and fostering a program to improve "technologies that may enhance communications, underground pipeline locating capability, accuracy and effectiveness of locating programs." Virginia has been in the forefront of promoting enhanced technologies to improve all aspects of damage prevention.

"Use of existing technologies are encouraged and new technology concepts are piloted in Virginia to continue to leverage better and more accurate ways to improve the overall program effectiveness," Tahamtani noted.

## Damage Prevention Beyond the Locate

# UTILIQUEST

## Industry-Leading Technology

State of the Art Locate Equipment  
 100% Validation of Technician Site Presence  
 GPS-enabled Follow-Me Records  
 Precise Unalterable Electronic Documentation  
 High-Resolution Digital Aerial Pictometry  
 Dashboard Audit Reviews in Real Time

**Locating** inc.  
 underground utilities





## LOCATING

"The level of transparency that has been created through technology has been a springboard to better communications," said Terry Fordham, UtiliQuest's Executive Vice President of Operations. "The tools we utilize encourage more open communications between us, the utility, the excavator, and the regulatory community."

For example, in addition to equipping technician vehicles with GPS tracking, UtiliQuest employs a GPS-enabled follow-me records system known as OmniLume®. OmniLume® retrieves and displays client facility records in a common platform directly on the technician's laptop. When the technician arrives at the jobsite, he or she automatically has full visibility into all associated facility records at the GPS location, and can easily toggle between records to isolate specific facilities.

OmniLume® gives UtiliQuest the ability to review all inbound locate tickets prior to dispatching and to compare each to existing facility maps, and immediately notify the excavator and the utility if excavation is being planned near a high-profile facility. "This provides UtiliQuest the ability to alert everyone involved if there's a high-profile facility in the area," Fordham said.

UtiliQuest also employs several technologies developed by CertusView Solutions®, a software and hardware company that specializes in damage prevention programs. Among these is eSketch®, an electronic documentation platform that provides a digital, aerial image of the locate site on the technician's laptop. After locating and marking the site, the technician uses eSketch® to draw lines onto the image electronically to specify the precise location of the utilities.

Another tool, Virtual Manifest®, incorporates the eSketch® image to create a comprehensive electronic documentation package, including the time and date the locate was completed, the One Call ticket number, and a GPS-generated stamp showing the exact location of the technician's vehicle, and the type of markings and tie-downs used.

Together, eSketch® and Virtual Manifest® provide precise, unalterable electronic documentation of the locating activities at each site, which has immediate value to the utility as well.

"I think the combination of GPS technology, matched with a GIS-based system, is the wave of the future," added Brooks. "For us at Dominion, it means we have a more accurate depiction of our facilities in the field, so it can also help prevent damage that might occur down the road."

"The GPS data is time- and date-stamped, and captured on the manifest in a way that can't be altered," added Brown. "That technology has helped Washington Gas be a credible defender of our actions in the regulatory environment and has minimized court proceedings."

The damage prevention process doesn't end there. Once the manifest is submitted from the field, another tool, FieldCheck®, allows independent auditors to review the manifest and the supporting documentation.

"We take the manifest and overlay it to the utility's facility records," Tarosky explained. "If there's a discrepancy, it's flagged and a field auditor or supervisor is immediately dispatched to the jobsite before excavation begins. If the locate is found to be correct, we then send in a records correction to the utility."

"We deployed the eSketch® and FieldCheck® technology in early 2009 and have seen approximately a 60 percent reduction in our damage rate in those areas where the technology was implemented," he added. At Washington Gas, the UtiliQuest liable damage ratio has shown a similar trend, dropping by 59.7 percent since 2008.

"The technology and associated processes give us the opportunity to



verify that all of the facilities have been accounted for and the work has been done properly before excavation begins," Tarosky said.

### Looking Ahead

Tarosky predicts that coming years will see even more emphasis on both technology and quality. For example, CertusView Solutions® is currently completing testing on the next generation of technology, an electronic marking wand. Using GPS technology, the wand records the precise coordinates of every paint spray, and then transfers that data directly onto the eSketch® platform. The result is a comprehensive unalterable documentation of each locate, verifying not only the presence of the technician but also the actual placement of paint on site.

"I think that's going to elevate locating to a whole new level," said Brown. "It will eliminate a lot of the human error in the transmission of information from the paint on the ground to the manifest. We are eagerly awaiting its arrival."

"We see a lot of good things happening in terms of technology, and in the capabilities it gives us," Tarosky commented. "And we're even more optimistic about the nature of the relationships that this technology can help us build with our customers."

Another tool to enhance communication between excavators and locators is Virtual WhiteLine®. The technology allows excavators to electronically indicate on an aerial image the proposed excavation area, and electronically communicate the actual dig site to the One Call and the locate contractor. In response, a positive report of what facilities are located with an image of their locations can be provided to the excavator prior to any dig operations beginning.

"The technology is a cost-effective solution, enhancing communication and promoting damage prevention at all levels," Tarosky noted.

"It's not just locating, management and invoicing," added Brooks. "It's damage prevention as a whole. You might be able to put paint on the ground, but if you're not doing everything else right it's going to catch up to you. We prefer having a professional relationship that reflects a professional environment, and with UtiliQuest that's what we have." DP

*For more information on UtiliQuest, contact Victor S. Overaitis, Senior Director of Operations and Business Development, at [victor.overaitis@utiliquest.com](mailto:victor.overaitis@utiliquest.com), or [www.utiliquest.com](http://www.utiliquest.com)*

