AMERICAN LOCATOR MAGAZINE

VOLUME 33 ISSUE 1
March 2019

The Roundtable Review

On the Cover

Over 100 professionals from across the underground utility industry took part in The Roundtable 2018 in Manteno IL. Read transcripts from featured Roundtable discussions inside as participants tackle points for action!

Photo from The Roundtable 2018.

Planet Underground Media
Publisher

Matt Streets
Editor

Tracy DeMarco
Marketing & Design Director, Asst. Ed.

Connor Gavin
Video Production Specialist

Angie Parilac
Production Manager

Ray Merewether
Special Projects

EMAIL
info@planetunderground.tv
WEBSITE
www.planetunderground.tv
Business Office:
815.468.7814
Fax:
815.468.7644

American Locator (ISSN 1090-400X) is published six times annually.

View our latest videos on damage prevention education and read past issues of American Locator at www.planetunderground.tv.

SUBSCRIBE:
U.S. — $45 - 6 ISSUES
or $65 - 12 ISSUES
CANADA — $95 - 12 ISSUES
INTNL. — $135 - 12 ISSUES

PLANET UNDERGROUND.TV

THE ROUNDTABLE

2018 REVIEW

What We Stand For

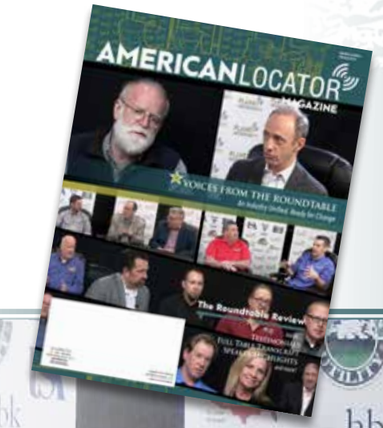
Matt Streets: Editor

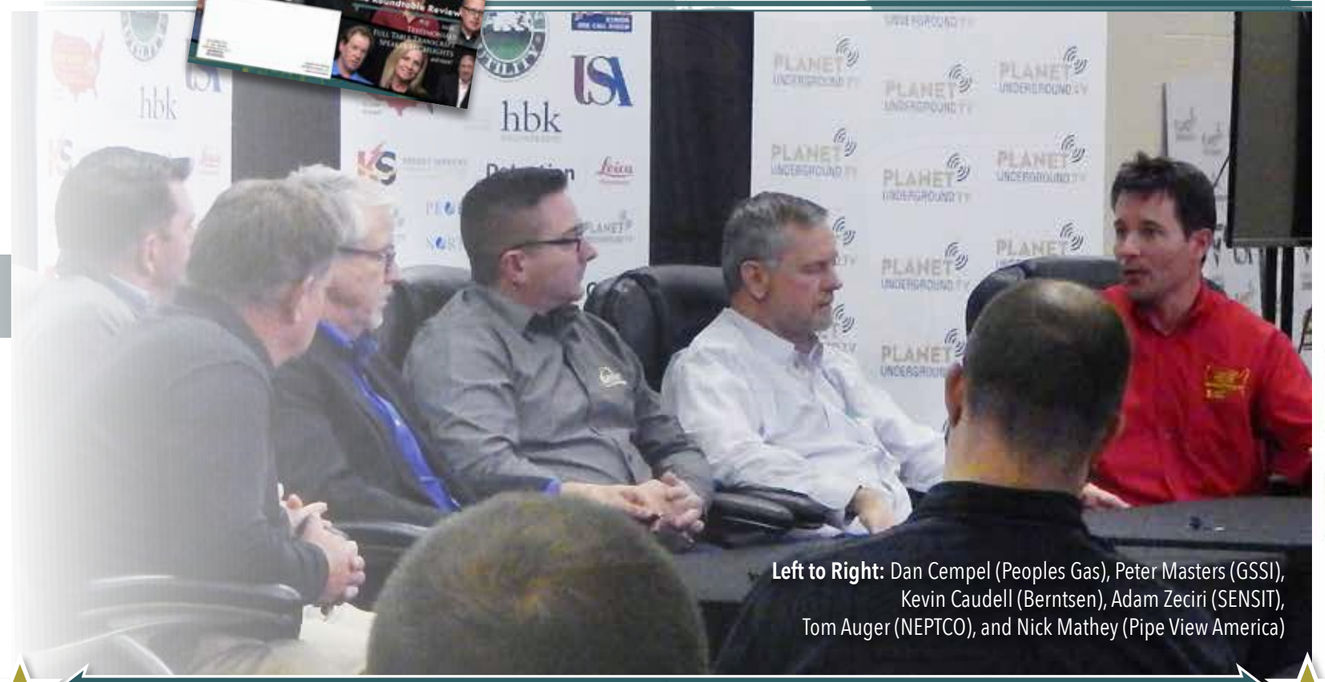
On December 12th and 13th of 2018, Planet Underground hosted it's 5th Annual Roundtable Event here at our facility in Manteno, Illinois, where we gathered over 100 of the best and brightest minds in the damage prevention world to debate, discuss and analyze the most important topics in our industry today. As always, the tables were organized to bring together people from all sides of the industry, such as having one person each from the utility world, the excavating world and the contract locating world. By doing this, we were able to better analyze these hot button issues from all sides in an impartial, judgement free environment, and thereby deliver fresh, up-to-date content to the industry.

From all the feedback we have received about this event over the years, perhaps the most insistent piece of advice is the desire to move beyond just discussing these issues, and to actively start striving for real change in the damage prevention world. We can talk about best practices and increasing communication until we are blue in the face, but it's all just hot air until new regulations, laws or industry-wide rules get instituted and make a serious dent in the ever-present problem of damages to underground utilities.

To that end, Planet Underground will be taking some of the most insightful opinions, statements and conclusions from our 2018 Roundtable discussions, and bring some of these same people together to formulate an industry position paper, the thesis of which will be to create an all-encompassing damage prevention strategy that could potentially be presented to a national, state or local legislature, or regulatory body. Here are a few of the key points and expert opinions that we'll draw from to create our position paper:

Positions from The Roundtable: The Premier Industry Networking Event





Left to Right: Dan Cempel (Peoples Gas), Peter Masters (GSSI), Kevin Caudell (Berntsen), Adam Zeciri (SENSIT), Tom Auger (NEPTCO), and Nick Mathey (Pipe View America)

1. CREATE A STANDARDIZED PROCEDURE FOR EXCAVATORS TO OBTAIN MAPS

Allen Kish - Ameren Illinois

"I think one of the biggest things would be to somehow make a better process where it's a standardized procedure that you can obtain your maps for the design process. Because once you know it's there, it makes the construction side easier, then you can get it on prints, and then the contractor knows it's there. It may not necessarily be completely accurate, which you can note on the prints, but at least you're aware of it and you can start looking for that…I think the big thing is to have a standard process that all the utilities have to follow, not just–this utility does this and that utility does that."

Tony Sileo - Opvantek

"I think you're right that the utility GIS environment is often far more complicated than it needs to be to support damage prevention. There could be a much simpler view of that data, with an automated way for each utility to map their data model into the standard, and have the data flow where it needs to flow. I don't think that's an insurmountable problem, and I think that's an important key to maybe enabling the data sharing in a way that people get comfortable with, because that way they're not sharing details that don't need to be shared. You're just basically saying: there's a pipe here, it's somewhere in this area, and it's a high-pressure pipe, and so now use that information in a damage prevention process."

2. DESIGNATE A CENTRAL REPOSITORY AND SYSTEM OF REPORTING FOR UNDERGROUND ASSET LOCATION DATA

Jemmie Wang - Bizmetrix

"So where are the enterprise level, multi-organizational project management software systems, web sites and apps that help systematize the necessary communication information among all of these parties, so that you're not dependent on 25 people for this project to communicate constantly, every hour, every day for it to be successful?"

Bill Johnson - Xcel Energy

"With some of the one-call centers, communication has changed, everything used to be done on paper. Now you see some of the communications where you actually can go through the one-call, you can attach your maps. I mean you can attach it right to the one-call ticket and everybody can see it, and then they have that asset. That's huge, where I could just drop it up there and get it over to you so that you or whoever needs to on that ticket has the ability to see–this is where I'm going, this is what I'm doing. It is key to have that communication."

David Deplaris – Rabine Group and Pipe View America

"Being the representative from an excavating organization here in Chicago, as well as a locating organization, it's the communication. It extends to a few things, the technology is there whether the database is Linux driven, Windows driven or something entirely different. You can link that as a communication tool, as they've started to do in Chicago for a singular map with a couple of utility supports. But it's the communication, it's the liability I think that is ultimately limiting us right now. I've never seen that data as a safety director presiding over multiple facets of work following up even just behind utility companies here in Chicago. It's that willingness to share, it's the security, it's the liability that's limiting us. How do we control or manage that? Maybe the key is to do it through the city. Maybe you'd have to do an additional permit process where there is a singular control for it so that we know it's secure data– it's being shared in the correct way to prevent the damage. That would definitely help us out a lot in the field. By far, it's how do you access that information, who's responsible for funding it, and updating it? The technology could be put into the equipment while it's going into the ground, put a centralized database going right to it."

Ted "Ski" Verdun - Western Utility

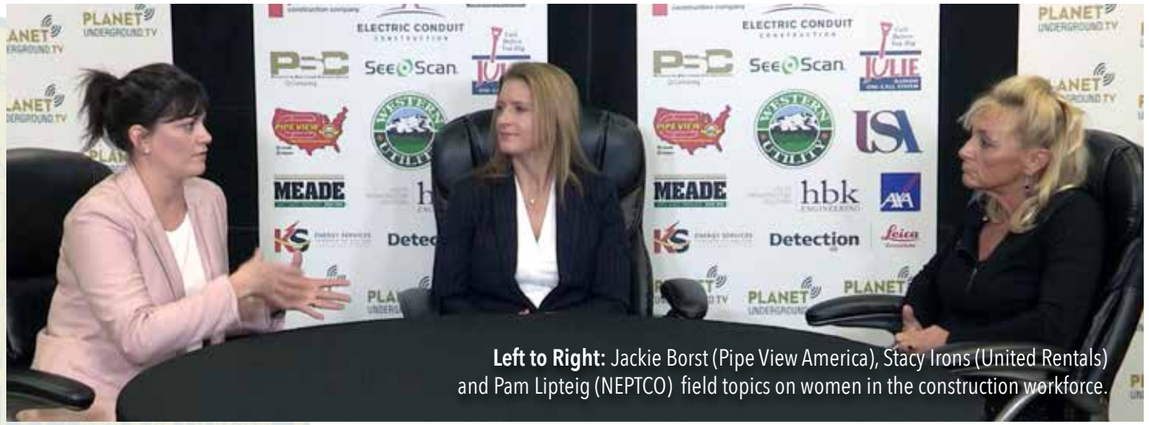
"From a contractor standpoint, our construction crews out in the field are currently responsible, more times than not, to collect that data. We're usually using offsets off of some structure, curb lines, center of road, and where we run into problems with that is five years from now, has that road changed, is that curve gone, is the monument that you utilized changed, moved, gone? From my perspective as a contractor, who should be responsible for documenting it? I would really like to see that the utility that we're working for have someone from their staff available to mark that, to GPS where we're going. Then it is their asset, it's their information. Then they're not relying on whether or not we're providing them the right coordinates. It's their guy out there while we're digging, installing that infrastructure. So I'd like to see them take that ownership of it."

Shane Higgins - John Burns Construction

"With the utility owners, what are they doing to update their maps as they're being notified of incomplete marks, mislocates, unforseen or found utilities that they weren't aware were there? What are they doing to prove that they're updating their maps to us, because that's obviously not happening, and it happens more frequently than you would think."

Tom Hall - KorTerra

"I know we deal with a lot of municipalities, and they have a lot of really good desires, but unfortunately, they can't do anything about it because of the lack of resources. Now I think if there is some way to provide that consortium, some way to motivate these folks to utilize their combined resources in order to standardize something among themselves, that might be a good starting point. But I think resources, not desire, is one of the reasons why this hasn't maybe progressed in some cases."



Left to Right: Jackie Borst (Pipe View America), Stacy Irons (United Rentals) and Pam Lipteig (NEPTCO) field topics on women in the construction workforce.

3. DEVELOP A BASELINE NATIONAL CERTIFICATION STANDARD FOR UTILITY LOCATORS AND CONTRACTORS

Justin Reed - Ameren Illinois

"Well I've heard, and I don't know if I agree or disagree but it's a good topic, is licensing. Is there something that needs to be out there? You have to have a license to do hair in Illinois. So like you know, a lot of these times people are out there–I don't want to say they're not skilled at the position–they're just ignorant to what needs to be done. So is there something that we need to do to have that? Licensing, is that answer?"

Tim Reiber - Badger Daylighting

"A topic in one of the tables involved contractor certification and qualification. Only a handful of states require contractors to be certified, registered with licensing, etc. I think that should be mandated throughout the entire industry. So you have a skill set and responsible individuals for the licensing of doing the work."

Thomas Young - SeeScan

"I think the actual training of how to use a locator doesn't necessarily have to come from the utility, but with the infrastructure, I think it's critical showing people what they have underground, how to hook up, how to use different clamps. What are you going to do in any given situation? I think that's very important."

Stephanie Menning - MUCA

"With the advent of data soon coming, doesn't that justify even more the need for a high tech, high paying training program for locators? And also, you talk about the more experienced locators. What we've seen is a super high turnover rate. So either we treat them like they're highly technical professionals with a certification, or do we just keep running them through the mill?"

4. ADOPT A SET OF NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ONE-CALL LAWS

Ron Peterson – Peterson Consulting

"So, shouldn't we be trying to nationalize this? We have 50 different one-call laws across the country. It's the same problem. Why aren't we trying to move the needle and say we need to nationally standardize the tolerance zone? And what about the life of ticket, and wait times?"

David Deplaris – Rabine Group and Pipe View America

"Throughout the discussion here, one of my big things is methodology and marking, especially when it comes to the Chicagoland area. The city of Chicago has no clear definition on ordinances for the markings, let alone do we have standardization of materials, which has been a theme throughout the Roundtable Event. It's hard to make some of this a standardized process, whether it's placement, or tracking the data, or security, if we don't have a singular standard we're all following. It'd probably be one of the biggest limitations, even for the utility operator. You have 50 different materials, whether it's through replacement or just age of the material, with new technology evolving. But there's no set standard of saying you have to use copper tracer wire versus radio beacons, etc..."

5. REQUIRE VISUAL VERIFICATION OF ALL UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES BEFORE EXCAVATION

Tim Reiber – Badger Daylighting

"And I think what happens too, is it gets left out of the bid process. Daylighting a pothole gets left out of the scope of work. So the contract is bid based on the written scope of work, and it becomes an afterthought. As industry leaders we've got to make sure that the owners of the infrastructure mandate visual verification of their lines before mechanical excavation right? Because they are relying on those marks."

Arnold Johanningsmeier – Electric Conduit Construction

"If that were to become mandated, I think it would probably be one of the greatest things that happened. It's forcing people to find the utility. It's essentially saving lives and injury, when people think they may have found the correct gas main they're looking for, and they haven't. I think that's how the Sun Prairie, Wisconsin incident happened with the explosions."

6. *INSTITUTE MANDATORY REPORTING OF ALL DAMAGES*

Dave Van Wy – JULIE, Inc.

"If it's not mandatory, then your data, even with the best reports in the world, is skewed, because they're not getting all the reporting. And so the data on the DIRT Report is absolutely accurate–for the data received. I could have one major investor own that gets 8 million jobs a year that's not reporting. That would have a massive impact on the data once you get it, right? Somebody said earlier, we don't know what we don't know. If you don't want to report it to the regulators, then maybe that's something the one-call has to manage, and we could scrub it. So once we get and understand the analytics, we scrub out any identifying factors out to say that it was you who reported as opposed to Ted or whomever, but if we don't get it, we're all just shooting arrows in the air and hoping nobody gets hit on the way down."

Ted Andersen - North Shore Gas

"Well the problem is, that the sharing of this information, for the most part, is voluntary at this point. The CGA is a collector of information, and they disseminate that information in the DIRT Report. But the majority of the incidents that are reported to the CGA for purposes of DIRT are coming from the locating companies. If everything isn't being measured, it's difficult to manage. If we can require some anonymous reporting of all strikes, we can measure it, and then we can attempt to manage it."

Fight for Change

"Now these positions are by no means set in stone and are certainly open to revision and adjustments. This paper will be edited and reviewed by professionals in the field, including some of the industry leaders quoted in this issue. If you are strongly opposed to any of these positions, we welcome you to write a rebuttal in defense of your opinion and submit it to us for review in a following issue. However, reasons such as: it would be too expensive to make those changes, or, it would take too much time and effort to implement these reforms, are unacceptable and will be dismissed out of hand. Change won't come easy, or without compromise, but the time for casual belly-aching and endless excuses is over. The time for real change is NOW. Are you with us?"