**Late Locate Symposium – Update**

(Article for the Ear to the Ground – Late Locate Edition 2021)

Late Locates are a serious problem. To help generate solutions that would impact the future delivery of locates, a Late Locate Symposium was held in December 2019. Twenty-five industry leaders consisting of Excavators, Utilities, Municipalities, Locate Service Providers (LSPs), and representatives from Ontario One Call actively participated.

As a result, five initiatives were developed.

1. Dedicated Locator
2. Forecasting
3. Pressure Points
4. Compliance / Enforcement
5. Data In, Data Out

The following is an update on each of the initiatives.

**Dedicated Locator**

Dedicated locator has picked up traction since being discussed during the Late Locate Symposium. Self-locating (having a dedicated locator on the excavator's payroll) and dedicated locating (hiring a third party to locate all underground infrastructure) is a way for construction projects to have continual delivery of locates when and where they are needed. Infrastructure owners are seeing the benefits and beginning to push more of their projects to the dedicated locator model.

As more of the industry is moving toward this model, there is discussion around certain project/infrastructure types being required to use a dedicated locator model going forward. The dedicated locator model keeps construction projects on time and helps reduce the mismanagement of locate requests in the system (duplicate locate requests, locate dumping, over notification, etc.). Companies that use dedicated locators also tend to forecast better and engage the locate service provider earlier in the planning process to ensure they have the required staff.

It is recommended that the infrastructure owners build a dedicated locator model into their construction plans at the outset. Much like Subsurface Utility Engineering, this is a time-and-money saver best organized by the project owner. One of the biggest challenges to the dedicated locator model, and to the delivery of timely locates in general, is having enough qualified locators available to perform the work. To help solve this, more qualified locators are needed in the industry.

**Forecasting**

Forecasting when, where, how complicated (for example size), and the number of locates that will be required for any given area remains a challenge for underground infrastructure owners and LSPs. Getting project plans and the timing of when locates are needed, well in advance, to those responsible for providing locate resources remains a hurdle. Even with some knowledge of upcoming projects, if a large volume of locates are requested earlier than expected it could impact locate timeliness for the season. The largest success to forecasting comes with projects that are utilizing a dedicated locator

model. Project owners paying for a locator directly are more apt to ensure that their plans are shared well in advance to secure the required resources.

**Pressure Points**

This Late Locate Symposium solution focused on encouraging the infrastructure owners to extend their locate validity periods, greater than the previous 30-day standard, and educating the industry about the sharing of locates.

Effort has been made toward getting more infrastructure owners to extend their locate validity to 60 days or more. Through Ontario One Call, and Ontario One Call's Operations Committee, most of the large infrastructure owners and many of the medium and small infrastructure owners have extended or are in the process of extending their locate validity. This strategy will continue to be a focus over the next few years as it benefits both the Infrastructure owners, by reducing the amount of relocates that they need to complete, and the excavator, by extending the excavation window.

For the sharing of locates, guidelines and materials have been developed and distributed to the industry. Ontario One Call and Ontario One Call's Operations Committee will continue to take every available opportunity to help educate about the sharing of locates. The sharing of locates is an effective way of reducing duplicate locates for the same project area and depth.

**Compliance and Enforcement**

At the Late Locate Symposium, compliance and enforcement initiatives were brought forth as a way to help resolve future issues.

With the recent By-Law change, voted on and accepted by the Ontario One Call Membership, there will be two major changes to compliance and enforcement starting in 2022. First, Ontario One Call will form a Compliance Committee made up of independent lawyers and arbitrators, with no affiliation to Utilities or Municipalities. The Compliance Committee will hear significant cases and use mediation, arbitration, or a hearing to resolve the compliance issue. In addition, Ontario One Call will use a new method of charging Infrastructure owners for membership billing fees based on the time it takes to deliver locates. This model, called Performance Based Billing, will reward Utilities and Municipalities with good locate delivery performance and penalize those with poor performance.

**Data in, Data Out**

This initiative focused on the disconnect between the information being provided on a locate request and what was needed by the LSP to maintain an efficient locate delivery service. More high-quality locate requests were needed to help create efficiencies for excavators, infrastructure owners, and locators alike. This initiative helped build a foundation for the material covered in the Professional Locate Administrator Course (PLAC). Designed for locate administrators, PLAC helps simplify the request process, increases the proportion and consistency of high-quality locate requests,and helps with the timely delivery of locates. Since its launch in October 2020, PLAC has had over 500 graduates and is expecting hundreds more by the end of the year. Anyone that is submitting or managing locates is encouraged to take this course. The more people that complete the course and receive the designation, the more high-quality locate requests will be in the system.