

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

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Mike Sullivan ([00:17](#)):

Welcome to the Safety Moment podcast. Nice to have you back today. My guests are Mr. Scott Landes with Infrastructure Resources soon to be Excavation Safety Alliance. And Ms. Whitney Price, who's also with the Excavation Safety Alliance. And we've talked to Scott before actually about Infrastructure Resources and their history and how they came along. A little bit of a continuation of that as the Infrastructure Resources team shifts to the Excavation Safety Alliance. Welcome to the podcast, the Safety moment, Scott and Whitney from, well, it used to be Infrastructure Resources. Soon to be is now perhaps the Excavation Safety Alliance. Welcome back, Scott. This is I think, your second time on The Safety Moment podcast. How are you today?

Scott Landes ([01:05](#)):

I'm good, thanks Mike. It's fun to be back. I'm surprised you had me a second time.

Mike Sullivan ([01:10](#)):

Well, it's always an interesting chat with you, Scott. No, kidding aside. I mean, you've done a lot and we've obviously forged a great friendship over the years, but you've done a lot. And I've publicly said before that I can't think of anybody in the US who's done more for damage prevention than yourself and quite selflessly I might add, you know, put yourself out there and you've done a lot for the industry and there's something new going on that infrastructure resources, the Excavation Safety Alliance is now where you're transitioning to. And I want to talk about that a little bit, where that idea originated from. But before we go, there'd like to recap a little bit about infrastructure resources, where it began and how did we get to where we are today?

Scott Landes ([01:56](#)):

Yeah, sure. Yeah, that's a great question. Well, we basically started back in 2003. I had kind of helped get an industry trade show going with a friend and then that kind of went away. And so we started with an outdoor demo fair, basically called Underground Focus Live that we were doing with Underground Focus Magazine. And in the end, he really didn't want to do shows anymore, so I kind of took it over. And that's when Infrastructure Resources kind of came into being. Although originally we were excavation, or excuse me, underground focused events. So we've had a real identity crisis over the years as we changed what we were doing. But then from there it kind of morphed into a demo and conference with sessions in 2004. And then in 2006 it really became the full on conference that it is today. And in 2006 we also started the Excavation Safety Guide, which is an annual reference guide for basically aim at excavators to have all the tools they need to stay safe.

([03:15](#)):

In 2010, again with kind of our naming issue, we started our magazine, which is now Excavation Safety Magazine. At the time, it was the Damage Prevention Professional, and that was so easy to say that we decided to change it to the DP Pro. And then of course we realized, but that doesn't mean anything to anybody. So it became Excavation Safety Magazine. And in 2015, actually Whitney pretty much behind started PASA the pipeline Ag Safety Alliance, which is a really cool program that is aimed at educating the county ag agents who then educate the farmers. And Whitney knows more about that if you want to

talk about that. And we also started locator safety and awareness or appreciation kind of went back and forth week LSAW in 2015 because locators just don't really get the credit they deserve. And so we started that and an 811 run kind of in conjunction with the C G A, I don't even remember when, but Whitney was kind of the impetus behind that too. So kind of a lot of different things along the way.

Mike Sullivan ([04:33](#)):

I'm wondering why, just listening to what you've done, I'm wondering why you did it all so slowly. I mean, it sounds like you weren't really busy at all. Kidding aside, I mean, we just went through a name change from Alberta One Call to Utility Safety Partners, and that was stressful. And then I hear you how many things you've done, how many change name changes you've experienced, and how many changes just in general have happened. And now I understand why you have white hair just like me, so it makes a lot of sense. But no, it's it, it's a testament. I'm guessing along the way as he went through this journey of change, you kept attracting more members that had to be the case.

Scott Landes ([05:20](#)):

Yeah, it's interesting. Our whole focus, as we like to say, saving lives through education. So we're really focused on that. And, what's interesting over the years, because I actually got in this industry back in the early eighties working for Carson Night selling marker posts. And so that got me involved with one calls and all that. And what's interesting is all these years everybody was focused on the words damage prevention. And obviously that's super important. But the reality is, at least to me, damage prevention is really kind of a subset of excavation safety. Because what's really most important, I would guess to everybody is safety and making sure nobody gets hurt when they're excavating. And the incidental byproduct of that is we also protect the buried facilities, right? So by putting damage prevention as the leading term, it seemed to me that you're kind of making the contractors and excavators, which are utilities, seem secondary. You're the afterthought is that, oh, by the way, if we don't damage stuff, you'll be safe. And so that's where we, as you saw our various things changed names, we really just got to that focus of excavation safety was really what we were all about, which by the way, led to much better damage prevention at the same time.

Mike Sullivan ([06:50](#)):

I get that. And so the change, and it is a journey of change and it's a journey of self-reflection. And as you move along on what you're doing, you realize that we're doing more than just whatever that service is providing information. We're providing education or a brand of services, a host of services beyond the original one, which was very similar to Utility Safety Partners change. And when we unified with the other organizations, we had to change. And in your case though, but the Horizons kept getting broader and the name changes and all of the peripheral of services and around infrastructure resources really changed as well. But the conferences that you've worked on over the years, and I, they, and they continue to be the pinnacle of the damage prevention industry. And it wasn't just in the United States. You provided services to the Canadian Common Ground Alliance here in Canada and also in Australia with Oceania.

([07:55](#)):

I think I'm saying that Oceania, and it had not been for the Pandemic. I think you probably would've been back there since the original one that occurred a number of years, a couple of years ago. But that was really just one thing. It might be what you're known for, but there's been so much more that you've been involved with. And now we get to the pandemic and there was an absolute need to continue reaching out and maintaining the education, the ability to educate, sorry, with everybody who relies on

that, the conferences or whatnot going forward that weren't happening, those were over. And infrastructure resources began, the excavation, safety Alliance town halls. And tell me a little bit about that. What was the discussion like around the table at IR with your team, and how did you get

Scott Landes ([08:55](#)):

Yeah, well, that's a good question. And so when the 2020 live conference, we literally had to cancel it two weeks before it was supposed to happen. I mean, it was a nightmare. So of course, a lot of people in the conference business started trying to quickly do virtual things, and a lot of 'em were just a series of webinars and things like that that were provided good information, but they weren't really like a conference. And we decided we need to do this. So we really dug in and in 21 we had a full on virtual conference with the networking rooms and keynote speakers and all kinds of stuff. And it was really good. People really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, as it turns out, it's almost as expensive and almost as hard to put on a real virtual conference as a live one. The other issue we found was that, so this was now about a year after the pandemic started, and so people were getting virtual out in terms of trying to have a two-day event.

([10:09](#)):

But we did notice that people attended who normally didn't get to participate because whatever their role is or their company, they never got to get on an airplane. They never got to go to a conference or go to a committee meeting. And so it was really interesting to see them get extremely engaged. And so we started talking about, so how do we get these people engaged on a regular basis and make it easy? And so the town hall concept came up, and what we really wanted to make sure of is that the town halls are as much as humanly possible, focused on solutions and positive things. It's okay to whine a little bit about a problem, but then tell me how do we fix this? And so we really work hard on these town halls to get that vibe going and it's really working, and it's been really exciting to see how many people actually attend these new people who haven't been in the loop before. Great opinions, great ideas. So they've been super fun. And we started 'em in April of last year.

Mike Sullivan ([11:23](#)):

And so really you took a situation that was the lemons into lemonade, really. That's what I see. And it did work. I was actually hosting one of the excavation safety alliances, or moderating, I guess is better word. And I didn't know what to expect. This is a fairly early days, I think it was not that long ago, but enough time ago that I don't remember exactly. And what got me was I was watching the number of people that were logging in and I was like, okay, we got 10, we got 12, and we got 30, and we got 90. And it kept going up. And I was like, whoa, this is impressive. And you're absolutely right. The people who typically attended conferences in person, they were attending as well, but there were so many more who could. And now were attending an excavation safety alliance town hall.

([12:20](#)):

And that to me was really, it is critical because now you're reaching an audience that you couldn't reach before and had it not been for the Pandemic, the Lemon, you would never have been had the chance or the impetus to make the lemonade. And so you took a bad situation which was affecting everybody, and you made it work. And it enabled infrastructure resources to remain relevant and to remain out there and doing exactly what it does best. And that is educating people exactly like your email address says, saving lives and through education. And I can appreciate that.

([13:06](#)):

If you're listening to this podcast, that means you are a damage prevention advocate. Yes, you can get connected. Are you interested in joining one of our Utility Safety Partners committees? It's as simple as going to our website and under the committee's tab, look at the committees we have and find out how you can join and how you can help influence change, how you can help influence better practices, education and awareness, or be part of our training standards committee, maybe the government relations committee. We need your help. We need your voice. We need you. Also, if you are interested in booking one of our ambassadors to an event or a meeting, you can also do that online by going to utility.safety.ca and booking one of our ambassadors. They are in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer County and Grand Prairie. Now we have a bit more of a transition happening. The Excavation Safety Alliance is now the name of infrastructure resources. It is changing to excavation Safety Alliance, and you're somewhat passing the torch there. We have Whitney Price joined us as well. Whitney, maybe you can just introduce yourself because I don't think a lot of people out there know who you are. And you've been around this for quite some time.

Whitney Price ([14:31](#)):

I have. Yeah. It's interesting kind of hearing Scott talk about the beginnings and going through everything historically. And I started back in this industry not having a clue what damage prevention and safety really meant with regard to protecting buried infrastructure. And I started back in 2012, I came from the banking industry. I kind of dabbled in the retail industry a little bit and saw the job come up and I thought, okay, that's interesting. I have no clue what this means, but I'm going to go for it. And then I met the team, and once I got the job, it was basically one month in, Hey, you're hopping on a plane to Vegas and you're going to this thing called the Excavation Safety Conference, and you're just going to sit there and learn and talk to as many people as you possibly can. So it's been a really good experience for me.

([15:21](#)):

I've grown a lot in the last 11 years. And it's funny, kind of when Scott mentioned the 811 run, I mean, that took place in March of 2013, so that was about a year after I started. And I remember I sitting two years ago and I was sitting at my desk, and Scott's always, I mean, anybody that knows Scott knows he's, he's not short of any ideas, new initiatives, things like that. We've tried a bunch of different things, but I remember sitting at my desk and an email came in and it was just the title was 811 Run, come Talk to me. And I'm like, okay, let's see what this one is. And so I went into his office and he said, we we're both runners, so we get the concept of what a 5K is, what a 10 K is, that kind of thing.

([16:05](#)):

And he's like, what do you think about doing some sort of public awareness event? It's not to generate revenue, it's simply to put out safety information to the public at large. What do you think? Can we do it? What do you think it would entail? And I was like, oh boy. I mean, I get the concept, I understand the idea, but how the heck am I going to do something that I have never done before? So I remember I immediately sat down, digested it a little bit, and then started Googling race coordinators and how to put on a run and kind of the basics. And it turned out that we actually pulled it off. I was a little bit surprised, but excited at the same time. But we had the run take place the day before we kicked off the excavation safety conference. It was on a Sunday, I believe.

([16:51](#)):

So we did that, and then the next day we talked about it at a session and tons of questions, tons of really good feedback. And then in August, 2023, so a few months later, we had four states that jumped on board and they implemented their own 811 run, which blew me away that they could do that. They just

took a simple model and they replicated it, changed it based on what they needed to do for their state, and it worked. So I think that was probably the first time in my career that I was like, okay, I get it, I get the concept. And it was more of an emotional connection than a job at that point for me.

Mike Sullivan ([17:27](#)):

So the 811 runs, it is interesting you bring that up. I've been talking about that with my team here at Utility Safety Partners for about a year, maybe a year and a half, that it's something that I would like to see implemented or introduced here in Alberta, whether it was just in Calgary to try it, or Calgary and Edmonton, the two major urban centers, because exactly that. It's an opportunity to raise awareness, and if you have a run like that, you are going to gather, attract media attention, and then just organically you're getting the word out. So I think the team that I'm working with, they're a little apprehensive right now, but I'm hoping that someday soon, maybe the next 18 months or two years, we'll get there. But interesting that I didn't realize you were one of the people that was spearheading that initial eight run many years ago. So congratulations. Now here you are 10 years later and you're, you and Karen Strubb are really, you're beginning to take control of the Excavation Safety Alliance, and Scott is, he's got other things to do soon. So this is an interesting transition. Where is the Excavation Safety Alliance going to go? What do you see in the next five years for the ESA?

Whitney Price ([18:50](#)):

I'm pretty excited about it. It's a combo right now of being excited and a little intimidated, but up for the challenge. We're working right now on flushing out more of a membership program, so getting folks involved in every facet of the industry to come together to share their opinions, their voices, their solutions, their problems, and really work together and create a community and a little family in the damage prevention world. So we're excited to implement that in 2023 and kind of see how it flushes out next year when we've got all of our ducks in a row. But I'm excited to see where it goes. And we're just talking about new initiatives and things. I think it's not just implementing new initiatives like the Excavation Safety Alliance Membership program. It's taking some of the initiatives that we've worked on for the last few years and making them better and morphing them into things that really work for the industry and where the industry is today.

([19:48](#)):

So Scott had mentioned earlier the \Pipeline Ag Safety Alliance, which is another, I've got a huge passion for this program. And I worked with Chris Thelm on it years and years ago, and then he kind of passed the torch along to me and said, run with it. So I appreciated the opportunity, and it was, it's nice to see that program grow from just mainly gas and oil operators, and we're kind of trying to bridge the gap into the electric industry in the telecommunication industry with all the buried fiber that's going in now and in really working with our core group of ag agents that have been with us since day one, and then having them basically, we call it the educate the educator approach. So having them educate the farmers and ranchers in their counties. And then a lot of 'em are saying, Hey, other ag agents that haven't heard of us before, they're actually going out and they're empowered and they feel like safe digging advocates themselves. So they're kind of doing the work that we want to do with these farmers and ranches. They're taking that on themselves. So I think it's kind of forward thinking, changing what we do, adding new initiatives, but being really mindful of just listening and collaborating with people. We don't always have the answers, but people out there do.

Mike Sullivan ([20:58](#)):

You're right, you, you've become the nexus of information gathering and proliferation, which is what the industry is looking for. What about overhead assets? So overhead power lines, that's something that, it's an avenue that we are in now when we unified with Where's the Line campaign, which was the overhead power line utilities in Alberta. There's a lot there. I mean, look Up and live is something that we want to bring in here in Alberta. It's in Saskatchewan. It was initiated by our friend Glenn Cooke Cookie in Australia quite selflessly. And he just put it out there that here's an opportunity to educate, a tool to use to prevent damages and save lives. What about that, because even though we're talking about excavation safety, a lot of the overhead contacts are because of big equipment that are hitting overhead power lines. Is that an avenue that the ESA is going to move into?

Whitney Price ([22:05](#)):

Absolutely. And it's interesting that you bring that up. Last month we just had a feature under the Pipeline Ag Safety Alliance program for that, specifically for overhead safety and tips to keep people safe. It's kind of bridged more into that avenue the last two years, I would say, with the pipeline Ag Safety Alliance. And we featured a couple articles in our new excavation safety guide that came out specifically on that topic. And I mean, you hear it on the news mean, last summer, the summer before that, even in my town that I grew up in, there was a couple farmers that unfortunately passed away. It was the exact same thing. They got one of their pieces of equipment tangled up in a line and a father and son unfortunately passed away. So it's a big topic, and you're right, it does go beyond just buried infrastructure. It's above, it's below. It's just being mindful and aware of the things that are out there. And I think sometimes we get so narrow focused on one thing, and I think it's just keeping the education open to make sure people are just keeping their eyes out everywhere. So yeah, it's a pretty big topic right now.

Mike Sullivan ([23:11](#)):

I'm glad to see that happening. And I remember when I first came to Alberta one call and I knew about the joint utility safety team, my board of directors had talked to me about it and says, I think we need to find a way to bridge the two and come together. And it wasn't something that was possible right off the bat. And yet, shortly thereafter, or actually just in recent memory, the unification was really required by the board of directors. And now that we're operating under this umbrella of above and below, it just makes so much sense and that we're going down this path, and I'm glad to see that E S A as well is doing the same thing as well. So anyway, congratulations on where you're moving with this, and congratulations to you and Karen and everybody at Excavation Safety Alliance on the path forward.

([24:07](#)):

I think it's an exciting time. The excavation, safety alliance, infrastructure resources, and all the incarnations prior to that, you've been the nexus of the damage prevention industry, and not just in the United States, but globally as well. So that's something to really be proud of. And as I said to Scott or about Scott earlier, he's done so quite selflessly. And I have to add that both you and Karen, you, you've had the same way about you do so quite selflessly giving of yourselves and when you're carrying this challenge of promoting safety and educating through educate, well, educating to save lives. So I tip of the hat to you and keep up the good work. Now, before we go, I want to talk a little bit about Utility Safety Partners 40th Anniversary and Safety Conference, which is, well, it's coming up less than a year away. I mean, what is it, eight or nine months away?

([25:08](#)):

It's coming up quick. It is coming up quick, quicker than I sometimes, but we are making a lot of headway and we are working together again with the Excavation Safety Alliance to as a logistics team. So you're haven't personally been to beff, but Infrastructure, resources Excavation, safety Alliance has, and with the Canadian Common Ground Alliance, we did a couple of conferences there back when I was leading that organization, and I'm really looking forward to this one coming up in February. But maybe you can tell us a little bit about where we're at and schedule wise. It's coming together and I, I'd like you to talk about it because everybody hears it from me all the time.

Whitney Price ([25:57](#)):

Yeah, well, yeah, I mean, I'm excited about it. When we first heard about this idea, it brought me back to the 2016 when we were working with the C C G A on their event and things like that. And I've only heard good things about it. And the concept of a celebration of 40 years of safety and damage prevention combined with education to continue making forward progress for the next 40 and beyond is pretty impactful. I mean, it's so easy to jump onto to things that you are passionate about. It's not just a job or not just the thing you have to do and then you walk away. It's something that it's kind of becomes your life a little bit. So it's excited to network with folks in Baff next year and in February and right now we've got the schedule kind of flushed out. We're getting ready to get some exhibitors on board and start inviting people to the event. And I'm excited. I think it'll be pretty well received. And it's not just a place to get educated, although that's a main component of the event. It's a place to network, to talk to people and to talk about the last 40 years, folks that have been in it since day one, and kind of go through some of those memories and talk about the progression of where things have come.

Mike Sullivan ([27:14](#)):

No, you're absolutely right. It's a chance to celebrate and chance to look forward and also look at where takes stock of all of that and recognize the leaders who, because of their foresight, their vision, put the building blocks in place to create Alberta. One called 40 years ago, and who knows how many lives have been saved because of the Alberta One call and the building blocks they put in place. I'm looking forward to it. We have three consecutive streams that'll be occurring throughout the conference. We have a recognition awards that'll be taking place, and we have a theme party, which is going to take place as well. And that'll be a lot of fun. But it's going to be a major event, and I'm looking forward to having everybody come to BFF next February 26th through 28th. And obviously I'm tickled to be working with everybody at Excavation Safety Alliance. Again, you're a great team to work with and you make it really easy. I'm not worried about it, to be quite honest. I'm not that worried about it because I know we're in good hands.

Whitney Price ([28:23](#)):

Same here. Yeah, you guys have a really good team. It's fun.

Mike Sullivan ([28:27](#)):

It is fun. We do make it fun. And that's really the name of the game. We want people to get there and have fun. So that's a key thing too. And if we're stressed, everybody's going to feel that. But I know we're in good hands. Whitney, thanks for joining us today. I certainly appreciate it. We'll be seeing you soon, I guess, and it won't be that long that the winter will get here, and we'll be hunkered down in BFF and the last minute details will come together, but before then, maybe our paths will cross again. But thanks for joining me on the Safety Moment Podcast today. I'm really excited for what the excavation

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safety lines is going to do, not just in the next little while, but five years and beyond. I'll be watching closely.

Whitney Price ([29:10](#)):

Exactly. Well, thanks so much, Mike. I appreciate it.

Mike Sullivan ([29:15](#)):

That's going to wrap things up on The Safety Moment podcast. Thanks for joining us. I also want to thank our producer Stories and Strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any director you're listening on. And please do leave a rating. You can follow us on Twitter at Utility underscore Safety, and we're also on Instagram and Facebook. If you'd like to send us a note, maybe you have an episode idea, email us at info@utilitysafety.ca and put podcast in the subject header. I'm Mike Sullivan, the president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below. One click costs you nothing. Not clicking could cost you everything.