

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

You are listening To the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety Is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:00:15](#)):

The alternate locate provider program is 1-year-old, actually a year old, and nine days was launched August 10th, 2024, and only after about two and a half years of development preparatory work. The A LP option in that time since August 10th last year, has been selected over 30,000 times. And since that fateful day, we've only experienced two reported damages on an A LP project. That's an incredible drop compared to conventional locating and marketing. Now with me today to talk about the A LPI have some, this is really different for me. We have a whole bunch of guests on the podcast today. We're going to be hearing their perspectives on what the A LP means for damage prevention, for safety, and perhaps even the advancement of best and better practices. And we have guests from Canada and the United States, which is really a real treat for me and for everybody. So instead of me introducing everybody, I'm going to ask you to introduce yourselves if you don't mind, because I'll probably get something wrong. I don't need that. Let's just start with you, Jamie, if you don't mind introducing yourself and maybe just giving a brief background of your relationship with the whole locating and marketing community.

Jamie Andersen ([00:01:36](#)):

For sure. For sure. So my name is Jamie Andersen. I'm a part owner of First Alert Locating, located in Grand Prairie here. We've been doing this locating industry and marking and all that fun stuff for over 25 years. Back in 2000 we started 2001. We actually became part of an active group that started up kapal and I've been involved with them for a long time, obviously in and out. But basically with Kapal, we tried to act as a voice for locating companies. I guess when we first started getting involved with the A LSP part of this, kapa had really been starting to come up with locating standards and basically get locators on the same page.

([00:02:37](#)):

We wanted to make sure that it was easy to enter, but that everybody that was entering the industry really knew what they were doing. So the group of us banded together, we come up with a level of standards. And then once the A LSP things started to roll out, we worked together with some of the consortium members to try and put that into perspective for us. I know for us personally, for First Alert, we really wanted to be part of it because it was a complimentary service to our existing clientele, gave us access to mapping. Helped us to train our guys already to improve, make sure that they knew what they were doing when they were out there and be able to represent the consortium the best that we could.

Mike Sullivan ([00:03:22](#)):

Great. Thanks Jamie. Iain, I'll turn it over to you. I'm going across my screen, so you're the next person. There's no preferential treatment here. It's going to go to Iain next.

Iain Stables ([00:03:31](#)):

Thanks, Mike. Good morning everyone. Iain Stables. I'm the senior specialist for damage prevention for Atco Energy Systems and damage prevention seems to have always been a part of my life. Prior to coming to Atco, I was a locator. Started off not knowing what I was getting myself into and quickly fell in

love with the damage prevention industry and locating, as you know, Mike, I think the A LP has been attached to me since the beginning. I've been heavily involved in it. And

Mike Sullivan ([00:04:07](#)):

Just a tad,

Iain Stables ([00:04:08](#)):

Just a tad. And

Mike Sullivan ([00:04:09](#)):

One of the

Iain Stables ([00:04:10](#)):

Things I like about damage prevention and our industry is a podcast just like this where we got stakeholders all across the globe. And the thing I'm really the proudest of with the A LP is we have Jamie and Lance that are part of the podcast, but part of the A LP and we've opened locating to another set of extremely dedicated and talented locators.

Mike Sullivan ([00:04:36](#)):

Great. Thanks. Iain. Lance, over to you. Hi,

Lance Norman ([00:04:40](#)):

Lance with In started up my business in 2011, pretty much predominantly in Alberta, but working through projects throughout all of Canada. We employ now a lot because of the A LP program. We had a lot of growth this year, but over 250 employees throughout Canada, 40 to 50 of them being locators. So a lot of growth. This year we pretty much when a LP opened up, hit the ground running and started expanding and jumping into it. So it's been a huge success for us and obviously looking for more opportunities. And we've got some work now with one calls directly. We've always done locating since 2011, more oil field and pipeline and now getting into the municipal infrastructure sector side of it and it's been really successful for us. I also am a part owner of a digger, so we have a drilling company that does a lot of fiber optic projects, so it's been a huge benefit for us on that side of it as well.

([00:05:44](#)):

We've seen lead times and giving us more control of the locates and being able to plan with the locator. So obviously we've hit some this year, hit some stumbling blocks where everything was rolling out, but where everybody's rolling good now. It seems to have a good reception. It seems to be working very well and as it progresses we will get better and better. So super excited about it. I also had the advantage to work on this early on before it was even rolled out completely with, I was a contractor for a consultant for fiber network owner I guess you could say, and dealing with a LP providers at the time. And it worked very good for us there as well. So I'm super excited about it, super excited about the opportunity, super excited about training people and building out new team and giving us a new avenue in Alberta, especially for locating, I

Mike Sullivan ([00:06:42](#)):

Think Lansing, he's excited about this. That's good. Well thanks Lance. Wayne, you've been watching the A LP unfold from the sidelines from the distance sidelines in Florida and you connected with me very shortly after it was launched or maybe even before if you could introduce yourself and just a brief background on what your role is in relation to locating and marking. And I'll be coming back to you later with some questions more specific to your perspective, which is very unique.

Wayne Jensen ([00:07:19](#)):

Perfect. I appreciate it. When I started in damage prevention, the dinosaurs were still roaming the earth. So in 1994 I was on the border of the National Utility Contractors Association when the National Transportation Safety Board requested that we send representatives to talk about how we do damage prevention. So that first session still resonates in my mind to be in a room where people say we are going to make a difference and we're going to start right now. So it's a joy to be a part of the process. And I think the A LP, it is going to be the model going forward, period. I think it's going to jump national boundaries dramatically and I'm just real happy to be a part of the discussion.

Mike Sullivan ([00:08:20](#)):

Well thanks Wayne and Ron, the guy who's probably forgotten more about locating and marketing than all of us know combined today. Thanks for joining us, Ron, and making the late appearance, which we always appreciate. If you just give a quick background on your relationship with locating and marketing and like Wayne, I'm going to have some questions for you later from your unique perspective as Wayne's in south of the 49th parallel.

Ron Peterson ([00:08:47](#)):

Well, thanks for having me. First off, I am currently the executive director of nca, which is formerly the National Utility Locating Association. Now we're just NCA representing Utility locating professionals. I hate to say we're a US association, we're more of a North American association. We have members in Canada as well as the states and even a couple in Mexico. So I started, I joined NCA in 1996. I went on their board of directors in 2003, 2009. I made the mistake of leaving a board meeting after we fired the executive director and I came back in and found out I was the executive director. So been involved with NCA since the year after it was conceived and been around a while. Also, like Wayne, I was a board member of the National Utility Contractors Association from 2003 to 2007. So I also run a program, it's a claims avoidance or damage prevention program for NCA as well. So in my life I started locating similar to Wayne in 94 I started locating. I've located throughout my entire life after that, also been a contractor. So I would love to tell you, I know a whole lot about your A LP. I'm looking from afar and quite interested. I think it's what I've seen so far is amazing. And like Wayne, I think this is going to jump countries and states, but I'm excited to talk about it.

Mike Sullivan ([00:10:17](#)):

Well, thanks for joining us and thanks everybody for joining me today. This is a bit of a monumental thing podcast wise. I've only had, I think the max is two guests before and now we have more than that. The one person who's missing today is Ron Laman. Ron has been a huge boost to the A LP getting it over the finish line at the end of the development phase and into operations. And it's too bad he couldn't join us today, but he had vacation lined up and unfortunately for scheduling and everything else, we had to go with recording today. So Ron, we're thinking of you and we're hopefully going to answer all the questions correctly. So what I want to do, guys and gals, and what I want to do is talk about the A LP in two or three segments and the benefit obviously, I mean how we got to where we are, what are the

drawbacks, if any, and then also where are we going? Where do we see this going? So Iain, I got to start with you and I'm doing that because you were the one who really pushed to get the A LP created and completed. Why was this such a necessary and I'll say aggressive objective?

Iain Stables ([00:11:28](#)):

Well, I think there was a couple of reasons, Mike, and you're familiar with the primary one. Despite all the utility owners' best efforts, we don't have a year-round construction season. And despite all the training on onboarding our locators do anticipation for a construction season, we always end up with a bottleneck. Some projects are delayed and over the years we've heard from excavators when they encounter delays, why can't we do the locate or hire somebody to do the locate? And I think when we really dived into that, we recognized that our traditional contracts have some built-in pinch points. And I think Jamie and Lancer, two of the reasons we wanted to do the A LP is we recognized outside of our traditional locators, there are a lot of other additional locate resources that are performing locates every day, just not on our behalf. They'd come in, they do private locates, they do secondary sweeps, and the A LP was a way that we could tap into that extremely well-trained resource and use them to help some of our pain points and eliminate some of the delays. And despite what some people say, it really was this idea, I'd like to take credit for it, but it was really born from the contractors asking for an alternative. And that's what we tried to set out to accomplish is give contractors and the excavation community an alternative, but also ensuring that the quality and the standards are going to be met through the locates. And I think so

Mike Sullivan ([00:13:08](#)):

Far, and that was the biggest task, right?

Iain Stables ([00:13:10](#)):

Yeah, it was. And I think it kind of lines up with some of the work Jamie and Ron have even been doing across the locate industry. We wanted to onboard and allow additional locate locators to complete our locates, but while not jeopardizing the integrity of the process or the requirements of the locate owners. And I think we haven't hit everything a hundred percent, but we're well on our way. And I think the people that have used it, and hopefully Jamie and Lance can talk to that have been impressed with it. And I think we've are accomplishing so far what we set out to do.

Mike Sullivan ([00:13:44](#)):

And Jamie, you've been involved obviously heavily engaged, locating and marketing for a very long time. It's not only your business, you're the executive director for capal, the Canadian Association of Pipeline Utility Locating Contractors and the A OP is a big shift. It has to be a significant shift, but in some regards and first alert, you guys have been doing locating and marking for transmission pipelines directly for the transmission pipeline company for a very long time. And really in some regards, that's just shifting it to the utilities now, the distribution assets. But it's a change, right? It's a big change and it's a bit of a paradigm shift. What are you hearing and seeing about the A LP within the locating community?

Jamie Andersen ([00:14:35](#)):

Lots of mixed opinions honestly, but really good opinions. I think from the contractor side, even though they have to pay for the locates, we're already out there doing the private locates for the stuff that isn't covered by normal one call response. So I think the big thing there is that if they can do a one true call to get us out there to do the private, and we're able and qualified, I guess, through the program to be able

to do the A LSP locate for the consortium members, it really helps with their timeline. They're able to schedule us on their terms. We negotiate rates right upfront. They have the ability and the option to use whomever they want. If we're busy, they can always call another A LSP in and be able to work with them. So I think there's a lot of flexibility in the program. Yes, there was stumbles at the very beginning. It's definitely a new program and we all work together I think in the best possible way to try and overcome those. And I'm sure there's still more things that are just going to advance this program going

Mike Sullivan ([00:15:43](#)):

Forward. And Lance, you're perhaps a little closer to the user side. I mean, you've got the digging element of your business and those stakeholders who are choosing to select, and I have to emphasize again, the A LP is optional. You don't have to select it, but for those users, the digging community or the members, even those who own the breed assets who are choosing the LP option when securing and locate what has the A LP meant for the digging community,

Lance Norman ([00:16:15](#)):

It just gives them their planning in their hand. It gives them the options and the resources to be able to plan and control the job. Whereas before you unfortunately were controlled by the public load. And so I think they're their owner of their own destiny. There's some obviously problems still. Again, you learn pretty quickly that contractors maybe aren't the best at planning all the time. So we've learned that this year and we've all known that before, and that's just the industry we in. And if you're in construction, you know that it's, Hey, we're starting digging tomorrow. Well, that's not possible. So you're going to still see those blocks in the way and those stumbles, but they have an option. They can hire this contractor, hire that contractor, it gives them alternative, they know and they get to reach out and directly consult with whatever vendor that is approved to work for them. So it gives options and it gives them a little bit more flexibility and it gives 'em a little bit more control of their project and it's a more direct touch. So they get to talk to the locators, they get talked to the business, they get a plan.

([00:17:34](#)):

Again, it's not a public load. It kind of is more like a client and client relationship. So I think in a lot of projects it works a lot better. And I think the community, from what I have heard, has been super, the digging community has been super happy with it and they're really looking forward to next year because again, it rolled out this year everybody was trying to figure out the system. So next year we can start planning and they can start planning looking to get locates ahead of time rather than before they start, get the locators out there a month before they start their projects, things like that, where this year was trying to figure it all out. So I think everybody's excited about next year knowing how it works and having everything already set up for them.

Mike Sullivan ([00:18:15](#)):

And in terms of costs, laning, the digging community is working on behalf of somebody else. They've secured a contract. So the cost of locating a marking an A LP cost is just rolling through right to whoever the proponent is of that project?

Lance Norman ([00:18:30](#)):

Correct. And obviously Iain and the consortium definitely get a better deal than the contractors. Of course they have a bigger load. And I think the prices right now are pretty fair that I'm seeing out there. And pretty much all the ALP providers are sitting around the same prices. And again, it might hurt when

it starts, but eventually the digging community will come up and know the price this in and carry the prices. And we will also get a little bit, the providers as well will get a little better and a little bit more productive and figuring out the system and making sure you have everything set up. So I think everything over time gets better and I think that it's just going to become the new norm. So super. It's been super good for the diggers everywhere. I hear I deal with probably 15 to 20 excavating companies on a day-to-day and they're all super happy and they're really excited for next year where it's okay, everything's figured out and they're also knowing what they're going to get and knowing what they need to do and knowing what they have to plan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:19:38](#)):

I'm chuckling a little bit, Lance, because everything's figured out. Yep. Maybe not. I don't want expectations to get too high, but we're certainly striving for that. It's

Lance Norman ([00:19:47](#)):

Working.

Mike Sullivan ([00:19:48](#)):

Wayne, over to you. Well, it is working. No, for sure. No. Wayne, over to you. You've been watching the A LP unfold as we talked about a few moments ago from your perch in the United States for quite some time, and you were definitely sold on the concept early on. What is it about the A LP that intrigued you so much? Because, and I have to let everybody know who doesn't know Wayne and anybody listening, Wayne reached out to me early on and he has been an incredible advocate and voice of the A LP from Florida and so much so that he would love to see it implemented. And he's had me give talks and Iain give talks via Zoom or teams meetings in Florida. And anyway, go back to my question though. What is it that intrigued you so much about this?

Wayne Jensen ([00:20:44](#)):

Well, it is really opportunity for everybody in the life cycle of a utility originally from the utility says I need to get from A to B. And so then somebody gets assigned to go figure out which side of the road should we go on based on density of facilities. And so if you start with the engineer using the A OP providers, you have an opportunity to provide guidance for design to put it in the best place with the A LP. Now all of a sudden you have the ability to hand off to the contractor who wins a project hand off the same A LP provider who's got experience on the project. And then during construction, the A LP provider really becomes almost everything damage prevention to the field people. They're there to locate, they're there to identify when there's potholing, especially important is what do you do when you reach the edge of the tolerance zone and you can't find it. So that's when the contractor is really ticked because now he's got to dig another foot and then another foot.

Mike Sullivan ([00:22:18](#)):

Yep.

Wayne Jensen ([00:22:18](#)):

And when you got the five or 10 feet, how do you convince that poor contractor that he needs to dig more? So with the A LP in the process, whenever you get to that tolerance zone edge, you got the A LP provider right there that's relook at it. So I see the A OP provider is ultimately being your damage



prevention professional person who is using his locating talent with best practice knowledge overall. But then it becomes extremely big that for the first time in the history of men and 8 1 1 has eyes on the contractor watching them identifying what they're doing. So good. I'm a proponent of PAT and the contractor in the back for great best practices as described by a LP. That relationship is just so critically important. So another big thing that I'm sure is going on in Canada and the us I'm currently helping a directional drill contractor in the world and he is putting fiber in two entire cities. So functionally the utility is telling 'em, get me fiber from here to there. I don't care how you do it. And so if they had an A LP provider in the process, they would functionally become the design arm of the whole operation and constantly work with the contractor. I mean, I've seen stuff have to jump back across the road because they get to an impasse without an A OP type relationship that creates real trauma. So I see a very vast opportunity to lead the world of damage prevention with this A LP process.

Mike Sullivan ([00:24:34](#)):

Well thanks Wayne. Ron, before I come to you, my question, I wanted to talk a little bit generally, and folks feel free to jump in anywhere you want between yourselves or ask me a question as well. Iain, you mentioned about the integrity of the A LP and that was paramount from the very beginning. And then Jamie, you and Kapal were right there parallel with us because that's where this could either thrive or die. And it was a bit of a challenge. We had to, in a nutshell, I'm not going to go on too long here, but we had to create a locating marketing training program and we followed on the similar pattern of the ground disturbance 1 0 1, 2 0 1 training that we had here. So we developed a training standard and that took the longest amount of time. Once that training standard was completed, then a training program was designed in accordance with that training program.

([00:25:34](#)):

And then we had locators go through the training program. Now, once they completed the training successfully, that did not mean you were an A LP locator. There was more to it. There was a competency assessment that was done by a third party. And even then that was not the end all be all. Now you had to work, we worked with plan view, so all the data was available through Plan View. And then you had the ability you were allowed to be an A LP locator, an A-L-P-A-L-S-P, alternate locate service provider. And those locating contractors that went through all the criteria, they appear on utility safety partners website and the digging community can select the A LP of service provider of their choice. So that in a nutshell, and I think I captured everything right? Did I? Yeah, I think so. Okay.

Iain Stables ([00:26:27](#)):

Yeah, you did a good job.

Mike Sullivan ([00:26:29](#)):

Okay, wow. Good thing just for three and a half years. But Ron, from your perspective and the integrity, and Jamie, yours too, Kaul and Noka, you follow parallel paths here from your perspective, this was again where this could thrive or die. And I'm assuming Ron, you were aware of that's how the A LP was developed. And once that's done and you look at the year behind us, 30,000 plus locates are excavations that chose an A LP as the option. And in that time, only two damages were reported to the utility owners, which far exceeds the data of damages for I'll call conventional locating, which is about seven damages per thousand notifications and two close to three damages per thousand locates. So we're blowing that metric out of the water. And Ron, this is more of a question for you. From the perspective of the US looking at what we're doing here in Canada, do you think this has the capacity to migrate into the us?

Ron Peterson ([00:27:58](#)):

Short answer, yes.

Mike Sullivan ([00:28:00](#)):

Okay, thanks Ron.

Ron Peterson ([00:28:04](#)):

Real answer, I have 50 plus little kingdoms and thou shall not jump in, but I'll tell you what I love about this, and I think Wayne touched on this. What you have to me with your A LP is an enhanced relationship between locator and contractor. You and I had the good fortune, spent a couple of different times, Mike and well, at least one that I know of in Australia, which is why you have gray hair due to my driving skills. But we saw what we saw there and I've heard all the complaints about, well, you can't compare them. They don't have population or infrastructure density like the US bs. They have relationships between contractor and locator. And if you want to prevent utility damage, that's where you start. The other fundamental challenge I think we're going to have besides all these little kingdoms that thou shalt not get into is the utility sector part of this full disclosure, I do a lot of court cases and in nearly every court case I do, I have to sign a confidentiality agreement to look at some guy's plans that everybody knows it's there.

([00:29:12](#)):

But national security, you know what, if I want to wreak havoc, I'll just call in and locate. They'll come tell me where everything knows. But I love the fact that the relationship is there. Full disclosure, this has been over a decade ago in Georgia, and this is going to do some of the problem that we're going to be up against. Georgia wanted to implement dedicated locators for highway projects and it went flat on its face. Nobody was going to allow this unknown commodity locator to locate my super valuable stuff. And that's where it went south. So we would have some things to do. I think it's a great cause, and I think it's the right approach to take. Again, we've been doing the same old thing for 50 years and the same old results. It's time to take a good look now as you guys have done your locators have some level or have a great level of competency and it's proven through your testing. And we're trying to do that now on a national basis, getting a certification going through. People don't like certification, qualification, whatever you want to call it, off of a standardized set which could lead into something like this. But there will be a lot of challenges. But what I need from my end is what you're doing already because now we have a workable practice in place and then we can work together to try to figure out how to make it go here.

Mike Sullivan ([00:30:47](#)):

And I go back, Jamie, to my comment earlier about there's some similarities between what the transmission pipeline industry has been doing for decades. They contract out locating and marking and they'll contract out even inspection work, onsite inspection work. And there's an element of that in my mind anyway that transfers to the A LP because with the transmission pipeline, and you're so familiar with this, Jamie, because you've been doing it through first alert for ages. And when I was with Allinace, the first alert was providing locating and marking and inspection work to Allinace Pipeline. And there's that relationship that is created with the locating contractor, the inspector and the excavator who's working in proximity or crossing the pipeline. And typically with a transmission pipeline, these aren't one day locates or one day inspections or multiple days or weeks. And that relationship factor that's developed between the locator and the excavator that exists with the transmission pipeline company is



being transferred to the distribution assets. And that's where I see the biggest benefit. And I think everybody's been talking about that in different ways. Am I right or am I not seen as right?

Jamie Andersen ([00:32:14](#)):

No, I think I totally agree. Especially with these bigger projects, it really does offload some of that stress put onto the one call system in the busy season. It allows them to take control and we have that reputation with them to be able to come out. We have their respect, we can work with them, but it's also educational. Is there better ways that they can do the steps in order where we might be able to assist 'em right down from pre-planning the project to how they're going to schedule to when they're going to need locates or if something happens, they change their work scope and they need us back, they don't necessarily have to wait in line again. So I think with that flexibility and obviously the relationship with that customer, it really does make a really successful program.

Mike Sullivan ([00:33:09](#)):

And it's a year we are just surpassed a year. There's a lot. And you mentioned yourself, Jamie, that there's a lot of learning still. I know there's things that we haven't learned yet that we aren't aware of, but you look at the data, and again, everything we do in this industry is data-driven. Everything. And that data is so compelling. And Ron, you mentioned it yourself and Iain, we've talked about it in other discussions. There's so many things in the damage prevention process, particularly the upfront element, whether it's software or the method of requesting a locate, which we've shifted calls to clicks. There's so much that has changed in the last 5, 10, 15 years. But when you get to the locating and marketing side, nothing's really changed. You might have better equipment, you might have, but really procedurally nothing has changed until now. And it's great to wave the flag, Hey, we got this done. We're not the first Ontario unveiled their dedicated locator program. And Iain, maybe we can talk about that a little bit because that was the nudge and a hard nudge that really said, okay, you know what? We better do this. And perhaps sorry for Ron and Wayne's benefit and the benefit. Anybody listening, maybe you could talk about that a little bit. You were closest to it, you heard what was happening in Ontario, likely through the Canadain Gas Association and your contacts in Ontario. What was it of the dedicated locator program that really pushed us?

Iain Stables ([00:34:55](#)):

Well, I think Ontario faces similar constraints that we do when it's busy season, not enough locates. And I think to address some of the concerns or I don't think I know what happened is the government to pass new legislation allowing dedicated locators, which on the surface is a really good thing. But I think the thing that caught our attention is there wasn't a lot of consultation with the utility owners or industry in Ontario. And I think Mike, that's why we reached out and partnered with USP, is we foresaw the similar thing potentially happening in Alberta, but we wanted to engage our stakeholders and really control how the dedicated model or the A LP was going to be shaped and controlled in Alberta. So it really was a nudge from Ontario in the passing of the legislation that caught us in Alberta by surprise, especially with limited consultation as you mentioned, the CGA and formerly cipa, they were not aware what the government was going to do and they were all responding to it.

([00:36:06](#)):

And I think Ron, you mentioned it, the biggest worry from a utility owner is great. There's legislation saying we have to allow this, but the part of the question that wasn't answered is, are these people competent? And that's really what we tried to do with the A LP was put a structure and a framework in that we as utility owners and the excavation community could be reassured that these people coming

out have been trained, are competent, and have met requirements. So I think really that was it, Mike. We talk a lot about the integrity. We wanted the excavation community to ensure that the integrity wasn't going to be put at risk with the A LP program.

Mike Sullivan ([00:36:47](#)):

I mean, we looked at different elements and we looked at Australia where it's always been the digging community that locates, they pay for locates. That's just how it's done. And they look at us, why would you do it any other way? We look at them anyway, but that was interesting. And New Zealand the same thing. British Columbia somewhat different as well. They submit a locate request, here's our map, and there's a little bit more to it, but not to the point that we have with the A LP or the designated locator Ontario. And obviously we looked at Ontario too and we had to develop a made in Alberta solution. And I go back again, I know I keep going back here, but there are so many transmission pipelines in Alberta that the industry, the excavating community, they're used to that, right? They're used to having a dedicated resource when they are working in proximity within a hundred feet of a transmission pipeline, whether that's provincially or federally regulated here in Alberta.

([00:37:46](#)):

And in my view, that was perhaps one of the biggest unsaid, unwritten reasons why we went the way we did. And I look to you, Lance, that you're probably from everybody here a little bit closer to the digging community web or not. That was a written factor, that was a reality. And Jamie and Lance, you're working alongside excavating contractors who work near everything, whether it's transmission, utilities, fiber optics or distribution assets. But they are familiar with the long history of legislation working near transmission pipelines. Is that one of the reasons why been it's accepted the way it has been, you think?

Lance Norman ([00:38:39](#)):

I think so. I think it's easier In Alberta, we take damage prevention, so it's such a high level here. We've got a lot of pipelines, a lot of major pipelines. You've got the ams, you've got the ACOs, you've got the tcs, you got a lot of businesses that emphasize ground disturbance as a very important thing more than other places. We have programs for privates or the pipelines like Abbott and things like that that we can pull information from. We go to Ontario and they don't have something like that. So I think in Alberta, I think the owners are a lot because we have a lot more critical infrastructure, big pipe, big businesses. I think that it makes it easier because used to it, most businesses work oil field, they do work town, they work infrastructure. But in Alberta it's pretty well known that it's a big deal and you have to be careful working around lines. And I think that everybody's got that basis in them for a long time. So I think it's easier to roll out in Alberta than other places probably. But again, you go back to the other thing with the requirements and waiting, I think having control of your own destiny for the digger is going to get people on board with it either way.

Mike Sullivan ([00:40:02](#)):

Yeah, you're managing downtime, right? And that's really, and downtime is money. If you're waiting for a locate and you have to move equipment, mobilize demobilize, that's cost. That's a big cost, which is yes, it's being passed on to the proponent anyway, but you're not as efficient. Really what it comes down to,

Lance Norman ([00:40:20](#)):

Something that Wayne said that shows, and I've got examples of and seen it, seen it work, is the relationship between the locator and the diggers and the X graders is like you said, you're looking for a liner, you're looking for a facility and the hydro rack filter and hydro rack's expensive. All it is now is the call. They don't have to schedule nothing. You don't have to do anything. It's you call and you say, Hey, we're taking a little longer to look at this, and nine times out of 10 it's just like, Hey, go the extra six inches and it's right there. But again, you have that relationship, you go there, they're getting it done quicker and they've got somebody right there on site that they can call right now, and they're not getting that downtime. So it saves money in that sense. Same thing, we've all seen it.

(00:41:09):

If you've got to do a route change or something like that, something jumped up and you need to make an alignment change, well, they're going to call in that locator or call you and put the ticket in and you'll come and do that right away from them because it's critical and they need to move. They need to move area. So I think it's going to be easy to get the digging community on it. I think they're going to see the value on it and value in it, and I don't think it's a hard sell for anybody. I think it's just the way that industry is going to go. And like Wayne and Ron said, it's the relationship between the X graders and the locators. It's improving and it's customer service driven and quality as well. They're getting both and I think it's going to be an easy sell, especially in Alberta. Go

Mike Sullivan (00:41:52):

Ahead, Jamie.

Jamie Andersen (00:41:53):

Yeah, I was just going to say, in addition to that, I work pretty closely with Lance. I mean, we do the same thing. We work in the same field. We've been part of Kapa, but the nice thing about it is most locating companies are like-minded. They're there to provide a service and they don't get extra work if they don't provide that service. There is requirements to be part of this program. It does cost us. So we want to make sure that that service is going to continue. And the more of our clients that use it, the better for us. I think that's probably why you don't get a lot of those damages is because you're getting those extra services. We have that extra ability and we have that extra training because we're used to going to site and marking everything that we can find. There is a huge learning curve between doing the private locates and going into the utility side. There's a lot of tips and tricks to the field for sure, but it's not something that I don't think locate companies couldn't take seriously and add to their repertoire.

Mike Sullivan (00:43:00):

Thanks Ron. You wanted to make a point and I'll go over to you, Iain, after.

Ron Peterson (00:43:03):

Hey, I just wanted to touch on a couple of things. I agree. Complete with what Jamie just said, but one of the continual complaints, or I guess accusations down here would be a contractor will never pay for locates. Well, I can tell you right now in my community, a major contractor that has made a special arrangement with the contract locators to have a dedicated locator, and they're paying for that and that's fine and they're getting what they want out of it. The problem is that contract locator isn't replacing that technician with another technician. It's just slowing the system that much more. But the point being people will pay for things, they will pay for quality. And just to Jamie's point, give me a guy

with a lot of private locating experience, I'll turn him into the contract guy in a hurry. He's had all the drawbacks to overcome. So I'll take that detective any day of the week. Yep.

Mike Sullivan ([00:44:05](#)):

Iain, you wanted to make a point.

Iain Stables ([00:44:07](#)):

Yeah, Mike, just on your question about the pipeline community, I think where what they've experienced that is perhaps new to some of the people working around more of the distribution is because of the risk, they have four-way sweeps done private locates, and what they really get out of that is not just good locators, it's that collaboration. It's that damage approach like, Hey, I'm not sure something's here. We might want to hydrovac, can you stay away from this? And if you were to ask me one word, how do you describe the A LP? It's really enhanced collaboration because that's what I'm seeing as the benefit. These aren't just locators coming out that have 25 other tickets to get to that day when they are out there, they are your damage prevention ambassador. They're going to locate everything to the best of their ability, but they're also going to have that communication that is not always there through the traditional locates. So it's really that collaboration and the next level service that the Jamie's and lancers are providing that are driving the success of the A LP.

Mike Sullivan ([00:45:15](#)):

Ron and Wayne, we talked a little bit about legislation and the A LP was somewhat pushed by legislation and other province, it perked our ears up, said, oh boy, we better get ahead of this. Do you think that's possible? Meaning yes, you have 50 different states, you've got 50 different pieces of legislation, but again, you can't deny the data. And do you think it's possible that a regulator or a legislator, a state legislation could say you've got X amount of weeks or days or months to put this in place?

Ron Peterson ([00:45:50](#)):

Go ahead, Wayne.

Mike Sullivan ([00:45:51](#)):

Oh, thanks a

Wayne Jensen ([00:45:52](#)):

Lot.

([00:45:52](#)):

Thanks a lot. I'll follow it. So to help answer the question, nothing ever gets done without data. Data is always the driving force. And what I want to point out to you is you have 30,000 data points where damage did not occur. And if we don't take advantage of those data points, shame on us because that's how you paint the picture of need, follow the money. Every person is spending money on the A LP, I promise you they're making money on it or they just wouldn't be doing it. If we learn how to capture more than just here's the data point where there is an A LSP on the project and that's why there was no damage or one of the contributing factors. And if we learned how to collect other data points like other things, best practices that the contractor is doing mean especially around the power holding daylighting, it just, there's so much data to be recovered just around that one topic. Because if anything's going to go afoul, it's going to go afoul on. We dug 10 feet, didn't find it when we finally dug, we found it. So how do

we take this initiative and start creating the data where we actually look at the 30,000 data points where there was no damage rather than the two damages that did occur in today's community, when I guarantee you, when Mike says we had 30,000 excavations without damage, but we had two damages, they're going to ask what happened on the two damages.

(00:47:57):

So I think it's just important that we shift the focus from the CJ dirt world to reflect on how we've avoid damage more than what happened when we had a damage.

Mike Sullivan (00:48:17):

It reminds me, Wayne of a chat, we had a while back measuring what didn't happen and that was such an enlightening conversation and I agree with you Ron. And now to put you on the spot, Ron, because you are on the spot, what do you think? Is it something that could happen in state legislation?

Ron Peterson (00:48:38):

I hate to say short answer, long answer, but yes, long range. It can. Here's the problem I see, and I hate to stereotype all one calls, but one call laws and the people that change them are notoriously reactive and not proactive. As a quick example in the state, I live in Missouri, we failed to pass a law for a couple of different years and then unfortunate accident with a gas explosion where a little boy was killed two months later, they passed the laws. We have to get proactive with this data helps that seeing somebody do it. So the key to do it in the states is to find that proactive system that really is on top of it, get their buy-in. And it's like anything success is going to breed imitators and that's what we want. Absolutely. Hey, imitate that thing all day long and we're one of the

Mike Sullivan (00:49:31):

Best industries for that. We beg, borrow and steal stuff all the time.

Ron Peterson (00:49:36):

Absolutely. So it can happen. It's going to be, yeah, proudly. It's going to take a lot of work down here. But yeah, it can happen and it should happen. As I said earlier, we've been doing the same thing for 50 years, we're getting the same results and we all were going to reduce damages by X and X. No, not without doing something different.

Mike Sullivan (00:49:58):

That's right.

Ron Peterson (00:49:58):

That's right. And this is the starting point to do that. And like I said before, I always believed if you want to prevent damages, get your excavators and your locators working together and it's just that simple. You're doing that and you're seeing the results. So yeah, I'm excited about

Mike Sullivan (00:50:17):

That. What do you think, Jamie?

Jamie Andersen (00:50:18):

To be completely honest, I think part of the reason this system is so successful is because we have not only a relationship with the customer at the end, we started the relationship with the facility order. So guys like Iain that are our forward thinking and come out and say, how can we do this better? How can we work together to make this work? It's a huge notch for us to be able to be part of the whole ground disturbance process rather than just one step. And I think that that collaboration was huge for all of us that are A LSP providers. Because when there is a problem, we can reach out, we can get that feedback, we can work out a solution before it's a problem. Just like Ron was saying, it's proactive.

Mike Sullivan ([00:51:05](#)):

And to talk about that proactive and reactive. I know a lot of, well probably most states look at Alberta. Well, you guys don't have legislation then that's backwards. And I am one of the strongest advocates for legislation. I am not going to say I'm not because I see a benefit for it, but the absence of legislation has also allowed us to be a little bit more nimble and a little bit more flexible. I'm not convinced that in a legislative environment we would've been able to roll this out as quickly as we did and perhaps not in the way that we did. So Lance, you had your hand up. You want to make a point. We're doing some

Lance Norman ([00:51:46](#)):

Proactive pre-engineering locating, finding the facilities ahead so that they can pre-plan their routes. Also, it gives us the experience ahead of time before we're going out and doing the actual construction locates, we're being able to see the area survey, the area. Same thing with us. We're predominantly a survey business, so we're getting to join up some of those locates with surveying and giving a product. So I think the community, obviously the diggers and the excavators and the engineering groups, they're being proactive on approaching construction rather than reactive and reacting to locate some problems as they arise. So I think as this program goes further and they have more control and more involvement, I think you're going to see that a lot more where people are planning, which it makes everything safer at the end of the day, they're getting ahead of it and they're finding out what's going to be in front of them ahead of the time, not during the time.

Mike Sullivan ([00:52:43](#)):

Now we paddle ourselves in the back here sufficiently. I think this is all well and good, but anything we do, there's always a, for every positive action, there's a negative reaction or controversy. And this has not come without controversy. We worked with the digging community, we worked with the road builders and everybody was apprehensive and there were some concerns at the beginning, but that seems to have dissipated from my perspective. But again, I'm not frontline like most of you. What are you hearing in terms of any other word except for controversy, maybe negative commentary. And have we addressed it? Are we moving past that? Are we gaining positive momentum from where we were when we started? Iain, I'll start with you if you're okay with that.

Iain Stables ([00:53:34](#)):

Yeah, no, we continue to hear the feedback. And I'll be honest, a lot of contractors, the excavation community looks like the utility owners are passing on the cost to them. And absolutely if they go a LP, while it does save us money, that again was not the driver. So I still think there's some skepticism why we launched this and some people view it as a cost saving, but wanted to share a story. I had a conversation with a contractor and we were talking about the A LP, and he said, why would I pay for a locate if I hit a line and I use your locators and it's their fault they're on the hook. And I said, to not hit



the line. That was the whole reason is to talk about the stuff Jamie, Lance, Ron and Wayne have all talked about is to utilize it to have that better communication.

(00:54:28):

That's kind of why we launched this. But there's negativity about it. People don't understand it fully and that, so it's like anything, some people are really open to change and there's still a lot of resistance to change. And I think Ron has said it a couple of times, we haven't really changed how locating has been done in 50 years. So it is going to cause some people some headaches and some worry. But I think we continue doing podcasts like this and we continue sharing the successes. We will see it grow and we'll see some of that negativity hopefully become understanding.

Mike Sullivan (00:55:02):

Yep. Lance, what do you think?

Lance Norman (00:55:04):

Just to add on that, at the beginning, I think all of us heard a lot that they thought the utility owners were coming out and passing the buck onto the contractors. And in the start of it, it will be that way because something needs to row out. However, you fast forward a year to two years where the contractors now know that this is what they're going to want to do and they're going to price it in there. And then the ACOs and the epcos and those consortium members are going to end up paying too because it's just the construction community is going to include it in their bids. So it might not be as a provided locate, but the contractor's going to say, Hey, I think it's better. I think it's cheaper for us if we carry an A LP option. So we're just going to include locates in our rate. And when we bid this project with Atco or epcor or whoever it might be, we're going to include a fee to have a LP. So I think it's just a matter of time, and I'm already hearing that and I'm already seeing that and it will roll out that way anyways.

Mike Sullivan (00:56:04):

And Jamie, you have an even more unique perspective because yeah, you're a service provider, but you're also executive director of Kapa. So from the service provider context, what are you hearing from the digging community? Are they like, this is great, best thing since sliced bread? Or is it more like, here we go, passing the buck and this how we have to do business now?

Jamie Andersen (00:56:27):

I think the people that have actually worked and had the A LP service on their projects, their opinions change really quickly. They like it. They want it. Yeah, they have to pay for it. But that's something that can be worked into the budget, like Glen say. And I think most of that stuff has been really, really good. And they'll only use us. They're getting to the point where we won't do the traditional, especially during the summer because so busy, there are delays. There's a lot of people to get to. And we've always looked at it that the one call service is for the homeowners, it's for the smaller projects, that sort of thing. This just puts a little bit more relief on the system to be able to work those big construction programs. But I think that the unique thing is that the A LSP is optional. They have to remember that you don't have to follow it. You can wait for your locates do the traditional way.

(00:57:33):

If you decide to take that option, which a lot of the contractors are starting to do. They're happy with it. We're on their schedule. They know what it's going to cost. But there's also that element too, where

you're going to get a couple of these guys that have forgotten to place their first call and they need us right away. Well, now they have an option. They can phone. Yes, they have to pay, oops, my bad. But at the same time, they're still getting that service, they're still getting that response and they'll learn for the next time and we help 'em through that process.

Mike Sullivan ([00:58:07](#)):

I'm going to go to our last topic here and we're going to wrap it up fairly quickly. But we've talked about data a few times now, and as Wayne so eloquently said, we have 30,000 plus data points and two data points of damage, which obviously are being investigated, but that it's overwhelming in some respects that we have this stark contrast between what I will call conventional locating and the A LP or the designated locator. In Ontario, you can't deny what the benefits are, and this is why utility safety partners exist. We are here to prevent damage. We are here to increase, enhance public worker community safety to save lives. And when we have data like this staring us in the face, you can't deny it. It's here to stay. And where it goes though. And Iain, I'm going to ask you and Lance and everybody, and where do you think this is going? I want to hear from all of you, but Iain going to start with you. Where do you think this is going?

Iain Stables ([00:59:21](#)):

I think this is going to continue to grow Mike, and I think it's going to be, especially for any of the large projects, as Jamie said, it's going to become the norm. We're going to continue to see year over year uptick. But through that, I am hoping we see the trend continue, that we'll see year over year reductions in damages. And really there's no secret element. It really boils down to that collaboration when you have people talking that have the same goal in mind, to enable someone to perform work and go home safely, well, without hitting anything, allowing them to all connect and talk, that is the key. So I think year over year we'll see this to grow. And I think a part of it with the data, Mike, as we continue to get more locates done and expand the data we're collecting, I think that'll become part of the story that we're all telling that not only does this reduce damages, I think where William was talking is we have to start collecting not just that it's reducing damage, but it's enabling you to be more efficient.

([01:00:24](#)):

You're not exposing as much, you're not doing as many hydrovac because you have somebody out here identifying that stuff for you at the time of the locate. So I continue to think that this is just going to increase increase. I do want to add one more thing, Mike, about the negativity. And you're well aware of this. A lot of people think that this is the program we're done. And you and I have long talked that really this is just the beginning. We're continually seeking feedback. We want to enhance it, we want to make it better, and we continually want to work with our locate partners to improve the requirements and the awareness about the important task of locating. So while we're happy with where we are to date, our journey's still not done on this.

Mike Sullivan ([01:01:08](#)):

Jamie, what do you think? Where is this going to go?

Jamie Andersen ([01:01:11](#)):

I completely agree with Iain. I think this is only going to grow the more and more, especially for those smaller utilities out there. They just don't have the resources. And when it gets busy, it's busy and there's no notice. So for them to be able to have a little bit of that extra support that the LSP can

provide, it's huge for the facility owner, for the contractors, I think they're going to get used to the system. I think that it'll advance that way as well. And I think from the locating industry, for us, we have to register as a company, but we also register our individual locators. So for them, it kind of gives them a little bit of a notch in their belt. I mean, it's a little bit of a career plan maybe for them. And it does marry up with the private side locating, which does run all year long. So I don't have a lot of bad things to say about it. That's good.

Mike Sullivan ([01:02:06](#)):

Yeah,

Jamie Andersen ([01:02:06](#)):

It's nice that we can meet with the consortium members every year and talk about where our struggles, challenges, weaknesses, and strengths are, and that's only going to improve the system.

Mike Sullivan ([01:02:18](#)):

Lance, I've said Iain knows this. I've said it. I dunno how many times if I had a nickel for every time I'd say it, I wouldn't have to work anymore. But when we initiated the whole a LP discussion and I could see where this had the potential of going, I said to Iain, if I was a locating contractor, I would be the first one in line to register as an A LSP. And you're there in that regard, but where do you see this going? You're at the doorstep of all this. Where do you see all this going?

Lance Norman ([01:02:50](#)):

I see it going getting big, and it's going to take some people, like myself and Jamie, I've been going out selling it, so You're welcome. Utility owners. But I got out in front of it and I knocked on doors. So I see it everywhere. I see it with row builders. Obviously the fiber projects are big right now. So we have a lot of opportunities in that major infrastructure projects. So we're working on providing a LP for down in Calgary with the deerfoot, with acon, huge infrastructure project, doing a little bit extra for them. So obviously doing the A LP, but doing some privates with them, wrapping it as a whole and giving them a good service and doing some of their submissions for us. And dealing with the city of Calgary, they get because their critical infrastructure staked out. So doing everything and putting it together for 'em as a little extra and they're super happy with it.

([01:03:38](#)):

And that was a sale that we walked in and they weren't sure, and now they're like, Hey, can you just handle everything for us? This works really good. Obviously big LRT projects in Edmonton, we're doing it on that as well. Again, same thing. They didn't understand it at the beginning and they were obviously, Hey, well, we're getting this as a free service, but now they're looking at it and saying, no, this is the way we have to do a major project. So we see a lot of opportunity and we see a lot of industry is going to jump on board with it, and it's getting out there and talking and getting the work. So I see it as a huge opportunity. And again, it's so successful here because you got some guys like Iain that are jumping on board. They're the owner, and you got the digs and the X graders, and you've got the owners and the engineers, everybody's tying in. If we can keep it open and have an open dialogue between everybody and nobody block and throw road blocks up, then it's going to be super successful and it'll only get better. So

Mike Sullivan ([01:04:36](#)):

Do you think, Lance, that maybe one of the next steps is that the excavating contractor will end up having an A LSP locating person on their staff?

Lance Norman ([01:04:47](#)):

I think yeah. You'll see. I think we've seen a couple consultants that have a couple contractors that have done that already. Again, everything stay with what you're good at. So obviously me and Jamie would be biased on that, but if you're focused on being a digger or being an excavator or being a driller, focus on being a driller, you're not going to be a good surveyor. You're not going to be a good locator. You can, but I think you'll see a little bit of both. And having that availability to do that, I think again, is a good thing to do.

Mike Sullivan ([01:05:22](#)):

Wayne and Ron, I mean Wayne, I'm going to ask you from your perspective in the insurance area, and Ron from obviously your perspective, what you do with nca, but where do you see this going perhaps in the United States? And Wayne, I'll ask you first.

Wayne Jensen ([01:05:39](#)):

Well, I think the biggest thing we need to get our arms around is what do you think a contractor is bidding for production when he can't depend on his locates getting done on time? So it's such a wild card where you know you're going to have production delay. After production delay, I'm going to try to get you to shift your emphasis to the cost management project management site, gaining controls for the project, bringing in projects at less cost with it, follow the money, keep following the money. Tying all this into DPI, capturing how we are doing things without damage, but cost management is going to be your win point. It's not going to be a cost to bear. It's going to be a way to save tremendous money.

Mike Sullivan ([01:06:39](#)):

And Ron, what do you think? Do you think this is going to make its way as a best practice someday and be implemented or be an option?

Ron Peterson ([01:06:47](#)):

I think so, and I think it drives me even more to continue the path that I've been trying to guide my herd of cats for the last 15 years is currently in the states locators are jobs on the way to something better. Usually they're well trained, they're going to the utility or sometimes the contractors. My goal and my association's goal is to make this a profession. One of the ways we do that is emphasis on training competency. We're going the certification route. So there is a confidence in the technician out there, which is essentially what you've already done. So I've got to continue that path to make this better. But yeah, absolutely. I think this is doable. Like I said, I see so many of my contractor clients that are, as Wayne said, downtime. Downtime, waiting on this or taking things matters into their own hands and making those side deals to get stuff done. Again, it's a matter of stepping back and saying, we can't continue again, definition of insanity, expecting that different result. So we've got to get away from that and get to it. Now. I'm really excited about, I'm anxious to see what you continue with to try to be a part as I can.

Mike Sullivan ([01:08:05](#)):

So I have no idea what's to come next, but I, I'm really excited about it. I mean, I have some pretty good ideas of what I'm hearing on the peripheral, but it's out of our control really where this goes, I think it'll begin to form its own increase and expand its own integrity, and that's where I think it'll go. But look, everybody, I've taken a lot of your time today and I sincerely appreciate everybody joining me today and being such enthusiastic podcast guest. It's been really interesting, and you're absolutely right, all of you. This is in its infancy still. We're still crawling. We're starting to walk soon, but we're still crawling. And I think, again, the data, as Wayne said, that's where it all lives and dies, and it's living really well right now. So I'm anxious to see where this goes, and I'm anxious to see it continue to proliferate across the province and maybe across North America. Thank you for joining me. Thank you.

Wayne Jensen ([01:09:10](#)):

Thank you.

Mike Sullivan ([01:09:11](#)):

Access. Yep. Wow. That was quite the episode in the experience of having that many people on as our guest, and I think it went quite well actually. Once again, thank you to my guests today, Jamie, Iain, Lance, Wayne, and Ron. That was great to have you on the podcast. But that does wrap up the podcast. I want to thank not only our guests, but our producers stories and strategies for facilitating the podcast once again today. And I hope you choose to follow the podcast with any director you're listening on, and please du ber rating. We certainly appreciate it. You can follow us on X at Utility Safety, and you're also on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. If you'd like to send us a note, maybe have an episode idea, please email us at info at utility safety 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 that could cost you everything.