

Utilities Protection Center Places One Call for Many Years of PR Support

Overview

The Utilities Protection Center (UPC) provides Georgia's "one-call" system for locating and marking underground utilities, helping to prevent worksite accidents that could result in serious injuries or disruption of vital services. Cookerly Public Relations was retained in 1993 and still today provides public relations support and strategic counsel to the UPC.

Objectives

Cookerly Public Relations is charged with creating and executing programs to build brand awareness of the UPC's one call system, thereby increasing participation in the "Dig Safely" program and spurring utilities throughout the state to become dues-paying members.

Strategy & Tactics

Cookerly Public Relations designed a two-fold public relations program for the UPC. The first was based on the organization's "Dig Safely" slogan. An ongoing media relations campaign involves regular print and audio press releases announcing safety message, important events and milestones. The proclamation of "Dig Safely" month by Georgia's governor is announced each year through news releases and photos. Regular communications with contractors are designed to reinforce the UPC brand and its "Dig Safely" program by keeping that constituency up-to-date on news, events, activities and important industry information.

The second component of the campaign is the "Digger Dog Utility Safety Program," an in-school presentation for fourth grade students delivered by a qualified utility safety expert complemented by the organization's mascot "Digger Dog". The presentation was created in cooperation with a panel of school teachers and is certified as compliant with a unit of the state's fourth grade curriculum requirements.



Results

Since 1992, the agency achieved consistent statewide media coverage, including more than 500 print stories and in excess of 1,800 radio and television placements.

The Digger Dog program has been fully booked every school year since its inception in 1996 with Digger appearing in more than 300 schools across the state (providing his educational, life-saving classroom demonstration for more than 22,000 elementary school students and teachers.)

During the term of Cookerly's relationship, call volume to the one call center has grown from approximately 500,000 per year to well over a million annually and membership has grown to include more than 98-percent of all utility providers in the state.



Highlights

Programs in support of the Dig Safely campaign resulted in call volume more than doubling, from 500,000 annually to well over one million per year.

The UPC is featured in more than 2,300 media placements over the life of the relationship with Cookerly Public Relations.

The Digger Dog program is presented to more than 300 elementary schools, reaching more than 22,000 students statewide.

Membership in the UPC by utility companies grows to include more 400, representing over 98 percent of all utility providers in Georgia.