

Case Study: Digging Safely is More Than Just a Call or Click

The Challenge

SYNERGY NORTH sought to address the widespread issue of complacency after the initial “Call Before You Dig” step. In Ontario, despite millions of locate requests annually, many individuals failed to follow through with safe practices, such as using appropriate digging methods, verifying locate validity, or having proper documentation on site. This complacency increases the risk of hitting underground infrastructure, leading to safety hazards, service disruptions, and costly liabilities.

The Approach

To address the challenge, SYNERGY NORTH launched a narrative-driven public safety campaign titled *“Digging Safely is More Than Just a Call or Click.”* At the center of the campaign was “Jerry,” a relatable, safety-obsessed neighbour whose humorous yet earnest reminders highlighted that calling or clicking before you dig is just the first step—true safety means thinking ahead and taking precautions.

The campaign leaned into creative storytelling to make an important safety message more memorable. Jerry’s character connected with audiences by turning a routine safety procedure into something both engaging and practical.

To maximize reach, the campaign was delivered through a multi-platform approach. A central video was shared across social media, YouTube, and the Weather Network, and featured at live safety events. Interactive elements, including online quizzes and utility-branded magnets, reinforced the message and gave audiences tools they could use in everyday life.

Targeted outreach was also a key element. A geo-targeted video banner ad on the Weather Network delivered over 181,000 impressions in Thunder Bay and Kenora, surpassing industry benchmarks for engagement. This combination of storytelling, practical tools, and precise targeting helped SYNERGY NORTH drive home the message that safe digging requires more than just a call or click—it requires attention, care, and community awareness.

The Outcome

The campaign delivered measurable improvements in both awareness and safety compliance. Since its launch, excavation-related incidents have decreased by 40%, a clear indication that the message was not only reaching the public but also changing behaviour.

The digital strategy amplified this impact. On the Weather Network, the geo-targeted video banner ad generated more than 181,000 impressions with a click-through rate of 0.13%—well above industry benchmarks. On Meta platforms, the campaign consistently

achieved over 9,000 impressions annually, with roughly 4,500 direct engagements, demonstrating strong audience connection and sustained interest.

Beyond the numbers, the campaign also resonated within the industry. At safety and utility events, “Jerry” became a memorable touchpoint, with the campaign receiving positive recognition for its creative and relatable approach to public education. This reinforced SYNERGY NORTH’s position as a leader in excavation safety awareness and education, showcasing how storytelling can drive real-world safety outcomes.

Lessons Learned

The campaign highlighted several important lessons for future public safety initiatives. First, emotional storytelling proved to be a powerful tool. By introducing a relatable character like Jerry, SYNERGY NORTH was able to spark empathy and turn what might otherwise be seen as technical or routine safety steps into memorable, actionable behaviours.

Second, the value of multi-channel distribution became clear. Delivering the message across digital platforms, traditional media, and in-person events ensured that it reached diverse audiences while reinforcing the importance of safe digging from multiple touchpoints.

Finally, the campaign underscored that safety education must extend beyond simple compliance. By equipping people with practical “what’s next” steps, the initiative not only raised awareness but also drove meaningful changes in real-world behaviour.

Quotes

“Transforming this safety message into a video makes it relatable for the audience, easy to understand and enhances retention. As a short, informative and entertaining video, it swiftly catches viewers’ interest. Neighbour Jerry doesn’t just capture attention; he commands it, ensuring a lasting impression on our audience.” – Amy Kembel, Vice President, Human Resources, Safety & Corporate Risk/Chief Privacy Officer, SYNERGY NORTH