



Absolute Locating Sees Beneath the Surface for Safety

by Dawn M. Barker, PrairieVisions Design Ltd.

IN THE OIL industry, there are more hazards than meet the eye - that's why Absolute Locating of Oxbow provides an essential service. For four years now, Absolute Locating has peered beneath the surface of the ground to find hidden power and utility lines, pipelines, and other buried hazards.

Using multi-frequency electromagnetic line locators, its teams sweep areas and provide an accurate map pinpointing hazards that could mean the difference between life and death for those working there.

Whether it's checking an area before a service rig is anchored there, providing a snapshot of a dead crop area at the edge of an old battery site to be soil tested, showing hidden dangers at an old battery that is being reclaimed, or scanning an area where pipeline is to be installed, the company provides a comprehensive record of potential threats, including inactive buried pipelines which may contain lethal H₂S gas or other environmentally damaging substances, live power lines that pose an electrocution risk if hit, or telecommunications lines essential to people living in the area.

"Hitting one of these hazards can have a lot of repercussions," said



Richard Lamontagne, the owner and founder of Absolute Locating.

Richard began the company in response to changes in the safety requirements for the oil industry. What was at first a small spin-off



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from his first company, Bro-Kin Anchoring Services, has now grown to seven employees who operate four separate line locating units, serving an area extending from the border north to the Moose Mountains, and east from Radville to Virden, MB. Absolute Locating has done extensive work in south-west Manitoba, and has recently sent a team to serve the Sylvan Lake area of Alberta.

Richard noted that the field of line locating isn't new, but that GPS mapping has improved in terms of equipment accuracy and efficiency over the years. In order to determine which equipment best fits his

clients' needs, Richard has done extensive testing and research, and is active in several pivotal Canadian industry associations.

Advances in technology are continually being made, resulting in refinements of the ability and effectiveness of line locators.

"You've got to keep your finger on the pulse - to know what's happening in the field, to stay on top of the newest equipment available," he said.

Equally as important are the operators, Richard's staff of trained professionals who read the data in order to create the maps.

"You can have the best equipment, but you have to remember you're only as good as your operators," Richard said. "We've got some really excellent guys working with us."

Richard said that traditionally, Saskatchewan has followed somewhat behind the regulatory processes in place in Alberta, and predicts that if the current trend continues, Saskatchewan's oil industry is due to see a substantial increase in safety regulations over the coming years.

"It's changing very quickly," he said, adding that the implementation of the

Saskatchewan First Call system two years ago was just one example of this trend toward safety issue vigilance. "As it evolves, you'll find that companies will become more compliant, in regards to ground disturbance issues especially. They'll just have to."

And when they do, Absolute Locating will be there to help them out. ♦



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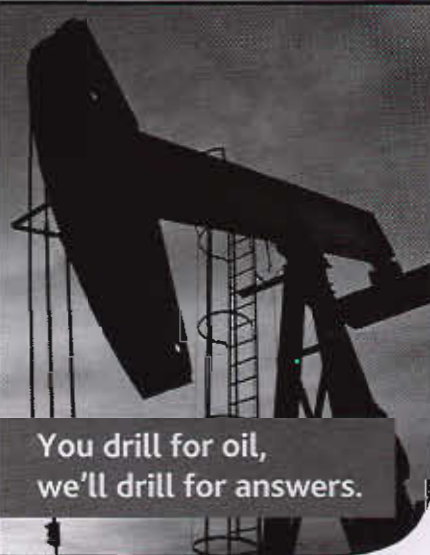
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