

Managing Locate Volume Via Voluntary Time Extensions



Missouri 811 (Missouri One Call System) has been utilizing three methods for managing the state's quickly increasing locate request volume: **advanced ticketing**, **extended start**

time and an **extension of the locate request**. All three of these methods are designed to allow greater flexibility in the locate request and utility marking processes for all stakeholders involved. Importantly, all three methods are also voluntary, meaning that one or more stakeholders must opt-in or agree to flexible marking timeframes.

The impetus for the **extension of locate requests** in particular was outcry from excavators in Missouri who ultimately passed legislation that created the extension process, which went into effect in 2015. Utilizing **advanced ticketing**, **extended start time** and an **extension of the locate request** have helped improve the efficiency of the damage prevention process in Missouri 811, particularly with regard to timely locates.

Timeline and Scope

Each of the methods for providing more flexibility in locate request timing were implemented at different times: Advanced ticketing has been available for under a year, extended start times have been available for a little over a year, and the extension of the locate request has been in effect since 2015. Each method required updates to Missouri 811's ticketing platform, ITIC. Educating system users about these methods has not been difficult, particularly because they are built directly into the user interface/experience.



Methods for Allowing Flexibility in Locate Volume

- Advanced ticketing: Excavators and/or facility owners can create a locate request using a future date. When the date draws near, the Missouri 811 online ticketing platform emails the excavator/facility owner asking if they would like to put the ticket into the queue.
- Extended start time: When a locate request is generated, either the online ticketing system or the customer service representative asks the excavator when digging will begin, rather than defaulting the ticket timeline to two working days.
- Extension of the locate request: Mandated by law, this process requires that facility owners and/or their locators who are not able to locate lines within the correct amount of time must use the Missouri 811 ticketing system to request an extension. The extension request contains a new proposed timeframe for the locate and generates an email to the excavator, who can either accept the extension request, reject it or ignore it (ignoring the request defaults to rejecting it). This process allows communication between the excavator and facility owner/locator, and documents the request and response.

Effectiveness of Voluntary Time Extensions

While managing locate volume remains a challenge in Missouri, the state's one call center does credit its voluntary time extension processes with helping to mitigate stresses on the system and normalize request volume over time.

- Advanced ticketing: Facility owners, who themselves are often heavy users of one call systems, were the driving force behind the implementation of this process and are also the primary users of this mechanism. Members estimate that advanced ticketing has the potential to reduce volume of ticket renewals by 25%.
- Extended start time: Allowing excavators to provide additional time for locate completion has been widely adopted: approximately 90% of locate requests coming into Missouri 811 provide more than two working days for marking.
- Extension of the locate request: Approximately 30% of locate extension requests are currently accepted by excavators.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Importantly, in addition to its methods for increasing flexibility in locating timelines, Missouri 811 also credits the hiring of many additional locators in its metro areas with mitigating some of the late locate issues that initially drove excavators to pass updated legislation in 2014, which first introduced locate request extensions. However, the methods for normalizing locate volume have also successfully increased stakeholder confidence in the damage prevention system and created better data sets for tracking on-time versus late locates. Missouri 811 is continuing to track the progress and implementation of advanced ticketing, extended start times and extensions of locate requests, and the organization is working on a dispute resolution process to continue creating more productive working relationships between damage prevention stakeholders in the state.