



## 2026 SGA Awards Finalists: Corporate Communication

### Entry: Glow: Transforming Natural Gas Communication Through Creativity and Connection

Company: York County Natural Gas Authority

#### *What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?*

YCNGA faced a critical communications challenge: how to break through with customers in a crowded, often skeptical energy landscape where messaging can feel technical, impersonal, or overlooked.

We needed a way to humanize natural gas, simplify safety and efficiency messaging, and create a consistent, recognizable voice, while also strengthening internal engagement to ensure those messages were delivered authentically across every customer touchpoint.

#### *What approach or solution did your team implement?*

We introduced Glow, a friendly firefly ambassador designed entirely in-house by our marketing team, inspired by a concept from local Winthrop University students in an EPIC (Employer Provided Innovation Challenge) program.

Glow was intentionally created to transform how we communicate about natural gas, bringing warmth, clarity, and personality to complex topics like safety, efficiency, and environmental responsibility.

Her form as a firefly was also a deliberate choice. Like the flame of natural gas, Glow represents light, warmth, and energy in a way that feels familiar and deeply rooted in our region. Fireflies are a nostalgic and recognizable part of Southern summer evenings, evoking feelings of home, comfort, and safety – emotions that align naturally with the role we play in our customers' daily lives.

Glow's rollout was both externally integrated and internally activated:

Customer-facing channels included bill inserts, newsletters, social media, drive-thru giveaways, and community partnerships (including local business collaborations and a university press release).

Internally, we equipped employees with "Glow 101" resources to ensure consistency, and they quickly embraced Glow beyond expectations.

Glow evolved from a campaign into a company-wide mascot and cultural symbol organically adopted across teams and initiatives.

*What was the result or measurable outcome?*

Glow delivered measurable impact across both customer engagement and internal culture:

- **Strong organic digital performance:** Glow's introduction achieved an average 8.54% engagement rate across platforms (LinkedIn 12.2%, Instagram 8.96%, Facebook 4.45%) – entirely without paid promotion.
- **High-visibility engagement:** A Glow-themed customer coloring contest generated **26,000+ views in one month**, significantly expanding reach and interaction.
- **Rapid brand recognition:** Customer giveaways (stickers, 2026 planners) and community partnerships (e.g. coffee shop sleeves) made Glow instantly recognizable in the community.
- **Internal cultural adoption:** Our employees embraced Glow as an honorary team member — displaying her on equipment, incorporating her into office decor, creating themed pumpkins and holiday displays, and requesting her inclusion in internal branding such as volunteer team apparel.
- **Consistent communication platform:** Glow established a unified, scalable voice across all channels, improving clarity and retention of safety and energy messaging.

This level of internal and external organic adoption demonstrates Glow's success not just as a communications tool, but as a brand asset that drives connection, engagement, and trust.

*How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?*

**Share:** Glow helps us make essential safety and energy information more accessible, engaging, and memorable for customers of all ages.

**Grow:** By strengthening emotional connection and trust, Glow deepens our customer relationships and increases engagement with natural gas programs and messaging.

**Advance:** Glow represents a forward-thinking approach to utility communications – blending creativity, regional storytelling, and brand strategy to reshape how the industry connects with modern audiences.



*Contributor: Sherrie Long*

# Entry: "Natural Gas Safety with Gus & Rosie" Coloring Books

Company: Atmos Energy

*What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?*

Pipeline damage from excavation is the leading cause of natural gas leaks, highlighting a need for more engaging, accessible public education to promote safe digging practices and emergency awareness among families and communities.

*What approach or solution did your team implement?*

Cultivate a safety culture through education by distributing "Natural Gas Safety with Gus & Rosie" coloring books. Atmos Energy's highest priority is safety, which dictates how employees interact with customers, work together, and operate more than 80,000 miles of natural gas pipelines across 1,400 communities. As infrastructure projects expand across our eight-state service territory, pipeline damage from excavation has remained the leading cause of outside natural gas leaks. To proactively address this, Atmos Energy launched a creative, interactive, community outreach initiative in conjunction with National Safe Digging Month.

*What was the result or measurable outcome?*

An initiative that began in Colorado is now an enterprise-wide effort, covering 1,400 communities in eight states and reaching hundreds of schools. Throughout the month of April, Atmos Energy distributed over 3,000 "Natural Gas Safety with Gus & Rosie" coloring books across the enterprise.

Our vision is for Atmos Energy to be the safest provider of natural gas services. While distributing safe digging coloring books is not the only thing we do to spread awareness during National Safe Digging Month, it is a fun way to educate all ages including the youngest members of our service areas.

## **Key Results Include:**

- Massive Educational Outreach: Distributing coloring books to thousands of schoolchildren.
- Strengthened Safety Culture: The coloring books reinforce Atmos Energy's commitment to safety excellence by encouraging safe digging habits among homeowners and their families.
- Damage Prevention: By targeting both children and parents, the initiative reinforced the "call 811 before you dig" message to mitigate the most common cause of outside natural gas leaks.

- Community Partnership: The campaign solidified partnerships with local schools in communities throughout the Atmos Energy service area.

### **Educational and Safety Benefits of Coloring Books**

- Simplifying Complex Topics: Distributing coloring books and crayons to teach young students about natural gas safety and digging practices helps turn abstract concepts into relatable actions through a fun and engaging activity.
- Visual Reinforcement: Coloring an image of a safe digging scene helps embed the importance of safety in a child's memory.
- Active Engagement and Retention: Each image can be used by teachers or parents to discuss safety topics. Children are more likely to retain safety information when introduced through engaging activities rather than passive instruction, making learning more effective and enjoyable.

### **Key Safety Concepts in the Coloring Books:**

- What to Do in an Emergency: Teaching children that if they smell gas, they should leave the area immediately and call 911.
- 811: Teaching children to remind adults to call 811 before digging to locate underground utility lines and prevent unnecessary damage.
- Utility Markers: Teaching children the uniform color code for marking underground utility lines.

### **Practical Benefits for Engagement:**

- High-Reach Potential: Coloring books are effective tools for maximizing engagement during school visits.
- Long-Term Impact: Coloring books are often kept for long periods, providing continued exposure to the safety messages.
- Broad Appeal: Coloring is a beloved, non-digital activity that brings children into a creative, non-threatening environment, making safety education accessible and enjoyable.

*How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?*

Coloring books are recognized as an effective pedagogical tool for engaging young children, making them an invaluable component of Atmos Energy's safety outreach strategy. Through the creative use of mascot-driven educational tools, Atmos Energy has made a lasting impact on community welfare and enhanced its damage prevention efforts, making safety an engaging and memorable topic for all ages.

# NATURAL GAS SAFETY

★ WITH ★

## GUS & ROSIE



**ATMOS**  
energy.

# Entry: Safety is in OUR Hands: Fueling Safety Through Community Partnerships

Company: Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline

*What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?*

Each year, Southern Star closely monitors activity and damage trends across its pipeline network, tracking one-call tickets, evaluating damages and near misses, and pinpointing areas of highest risk. While pipeline markers and educational materials were in place, a persistent challenge remained: ensuring critical safety information consistently reached the people most likely to impact underground infrastructure and motivating real behavior change.

To close that gap, Southern Star launched a comprehensive, proactive engagement initiative designed to meet stakeholders where they are. By expanding outreach to contractors, excavators, emergency responders, students, and communities through multiple channels, the initiative set out to reduce risk, prevent incidents, and cultivate a shared, systemwide culture of safety.

*What approach or solution did your team implement?*

Southern Star's Corporate Communications and Public Awareness team took a fresh, data-driven look at how education and engagement could be strengthened across its footprint. The approach centered on three clear goals:

- Increase awareness to prevent damage and potential incidents
- Equip team members and community stakeholders to share responsibility for safe excavation
- Prepare communities to respond safely and effectively if an emergency occurs

To bring these objectives to life, the team deployed a coordinated mix of strategies, including enhanced advertising, deeper engagement with emergency officials, stronger community connections through chambers and local events, and expanded education opportunities for students of all ages.

## **Advertising Strategy**

Safety messages work best when they're timely, visible, and local. Corporate Communications focused outreach in areas with dense pipeline infrastructure and elevated risk, partnering with schools, emergency officials, farmers, and landowners to display customized 811 billboards featuring the message: "Safety is in OUR hands. Every dig. Every time." Strategically placed across Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming, the campaign reinforced that pipeline safety is a shared responsibility.

To extend that visibility even further, Southern Star wrapped emergency response trailers with bold 811 graphics, turning mobile assets into rolling safety reminders during routine work, incident response, and natural disaster recovery. Inspired by tornado impacts in Oklahoma, this initiative underscored the importance of calling 811 during cleanup efforts. By the end of 2026, all emergency response trailers systemwide will be fully wrapped and deployment ready.

Geofencing advertisements added another layer of protection, delivering targeted safety reminders directly to communities affected by severe weather where cleanup activity increases the risk of utility damage. Seasonal campaigns during National Safe Digging Month (April) and National 811 Day (August) further reinforced the message with timely outreach to excavators, homeowners, agricultural operators, and fiber installers.

To ensure accessibility, Spanish-language radio advertisements were launched in high-population, high-risk areas, expanding reach to diverse audiences. These efforts were amplified through in-person engagement at farmers' markets and local events, where Southern Star team members connected face-to-face with community members to share resources, answer questions, and build trust.

### **Emergency Official Strategy**

Prepared communities start with prepared responders. In partnership with Enertech, Southern Star established a Priority Responder Database to support emergency preparedness across its pipeline system. The database identifies local first responders and provides quick access to critical contact information during potential incidents while also strengthening relationships beyond emergency response.

Through this collaboration, Southern Star gained clearer insight into local response capabilities and equipment needs. The assessment identified critical gaps, including the need for approximately 99 gas monitors/meters and 88 intrinsically safe radios, tools essential for hazard detection, communication, and responder safety. These insights are shaping Southern Star's multiyear strategy to expand partnership by helping enhance our community emergency responders' readiness across the system.

### **Chamber Strategy**

With a pipeline network stretching from Missouri to Wyoming, meaningful community connection requires intentional local engagement. Corporate Communications expanded involvement with chambers of commerce, creating opportunities for direct dialogue with business leaders and civic organizations.

Southern Star is hosting five chamber events this year, including chamber coffees at company facilities, to showcase operations, highlight the role of natural gas, and deliver the 811 message firsthand. Participation in chamber breakfasts, expos, and networking events further

strengthened relationships, while inviting chamber leaders into Southern Star facilities helped deepen understanding of operations and shared safety responsibility.

## **School Strategy**

Education starts early and pays off for generations. Southern Star focused school outreach in communities near new projects, areas with higher damage activity, and locations with established education partnerships. Presentations blended pipeline fundamentals, the role of natural gas in daily life, and the importance of protecting underground utilities.

For younger students, “Southern Star-ville” brought safety concepts to life through interactive mapping, games, and hands-on activities exploring utility locations and flag colors. For older students, supervised line-locating experiences alongside Southern Star professionals offered real-world insight into pipeline operations and reinforced why calling 811 matters. These immersive experiences consistently sparked curiosity, engagement, and safety awareness.

### *What was the result or measurable outcome?*

The results speak clearly. Following implementation of targeted outreach strategies, total damages dropped by 60% from 2024 to 2025. In Edmond, Oklahoma, near misses declined from eleven to four after targeted radio outreach. In Wichita, Kansas, damages fell from two to zero after billboard and radio placement.

In 2025 alone, billboards generated more than 600,000 weekly impressions across approximately half of Southern Star’s operating locations. Seven radio campaigns aired in high-risk areas, and a geofencing initiative supported storm recovery safety. Emergency engagement included 50 face-to-face interactions, 47 local emergency planning committee (LEPC) meetings, and identification of critical responder equipment needs. Community outreach reached thousands through 37 events, 21 chamber engagements, and expanded education efforts in 16 schools.

Together, these outcomes demonstrate the power of focused, data-driven engagement, reducing risk, strengthening preparedness, and building safer communities.

### *How does this work reflect SGA’s mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?*

Safety isn’t just a Southern Star priority; it’s an industry promise. By strengthening education, outreach, and partnerships, Southern Star helps ensure natural gas is viewed as essential, reliable, and safe within the communities it serves.

The strategies developed by the Corporate Communications and Public Awareness team are scalable, shareable, and replicable, providing a blueprint for industry partners. As the natural

gas industry continues to grow, so must its commitment to safety, awareness, and community trust. Southern Star is proud to help lead that charge.



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# Entry: Southern Company Gas - Safe Digging 2025

Company: Southern Company Gas

## *What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?*

Damage to underground utility lines can create costly problems for residents, business owners and the greater community. Contacting 811 before any digging project helps protect the lines from that damage. Our campaign educates audiences on the importance of digging safely and the steps to do so.

Southern Company Gas is comprised of natural gas distribution companies in Georgia, Tennessee, Illinois and Virginia totaling more than four million customers. The assets developed for this campaign were shared across our footprint.

## *What approach or solution did your team implement?*

Our approach involved multiple publicity channels - web content, social media and videos, including a new episode from our Safe Digging hero – 811 Man! In this episode, 811 Man reads his fan mail. The topics covered strategically reflected the Safe Digging questions most frequently received by our Call Centers.

## *What was the result or measurable outcome?*

The campaign successfully elevated awareness of 811 and safe digging practices across the communities we serve. By addressing the most common questions received by our Call Centers through engaging, multi-channel content, the initiative reinforced consistent messaging, improved public understanding, and supported proactive damage prevention. The campaign strengthened safety education while advancing industry-wide awareness and accountability.

## *How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?*

With immense growth in our communities, damage prevention stays top of mind for our teams. Our campaign elevated safety awareness across the communities we serve. By delivering clear, accessible education on 811 and damage-prevention practices, we shared critical knowledge that property owners and contractors could easily adopt and share.



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