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GOVERNOR DANIELS PROCLAIMS APRIL AS SAFE DIGGING MONTH; ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO CALL INDIANA 811 BEFORE THEY DIG

Awareness month part of national initiative that seeks to prevent community damage and personal injury that can occur when buried utilities are damaged

INDIANAPOLIS (March 30, 2009) — Gov. Mitch Daniels has proclaimed April 1 as the official start of Indiana Safe Digging Month, a statewide initiative aimed at raising awareness of the importance of notifying Indiana 811 before all digging projects to reduce the risk of striking underground utility lines and potentially causing community damage or personal injury.

Homeowners and contractors should contact Indiana 811 by dialing 8-1-1, which is a free call, at least two working days before breaking ground. Indiana 811 then notifies the appropriate member utility companies of the intent to dig so professional locators can be sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags or spray paint. Once lines have been properly marked, digging can begin around the marked lines.

“By proclaiming April as ‘Safe Digging Month,’ Indiana acknowledges that safe digging is a serious matter and that the state is committed to consumer education and damage prevention,” said Annmarie Robertson, Director of Pipeline Safety for the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

Throughout April, Indiana 811 will join other stakeholders of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the national association dedicated to protecting underground utility lines and those who dig near them, in leading local campaigns across the country to spread awareness about 811, the national call-before-you-dig number, and the importance of calling before digging.

Failure to call 811 before digging results in more than 256,000 unintentional utility damages annually across the country — an average of 700 incidents per day.

Indiana 811 recognizes that many state residents may be planning to observe either Earth Day on April 22 or Arbor Day on April 24, and it is important to remember that even beautification projects such as these require a phone call to Indiana 811.

“We’re strongly encouraging individuals involved in Earth Day and Arbor Day tree plantings to call 811 before they start digging because we want to make sure their volunteer efforts have only positive effects on the environment,” said Dan Meiners, Indiana 811 Executive Director. “By having underground lines marked, volunteers are reducing the risk of striking a line and can focus on their environmental contributions.”

Whether Hoosiers are planning on planting trees, building a deck, installing a mailbox or any other project that involves digging, Indiana 811 offers the following recommendations for a busy digging season:

- Always call 811 before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Tell neighbors, co-workers, family and friends about 811 if they discuss their plans for an outdoor home improvement project with you.
- Plan ahead – Indiana 811 is always open. Just make sure you call at least two working days in advance of your project start date.
- Avoid starting projects until you’re sure all lines are marked. If you’re unsure, confirm that all lines have been marked by contacting Indiana 811.
- Choose another location on the property for a project if the original planned site is near utility line markings.
- If your excavation is within two feet of the marked facility, you must only use hand tools with extreme caution.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that a call to 811 has been made. Don’t allow work to begin if the lines aren’t marked.

Visit www.indiana811.org for more information about 811 and the call-before-you-dig process.

About Indiana 811

Indiana 811, formerly known as Indiana Underground Plant Protection Service (IUPPS), was formed in 1981 by the owners and operators of underground facilities in Indiana. The mission of Indiana 811 is to unite the 890 members to promote damage prevention, public awareness of underground facilities and to operate an efficient and economical contact center to provide valued services for our members, excavators, and the public. Indiana 811 offers a one-point contact for homeowners and excavators to reach members to notify them of proposed excavation.

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