

NEWS RELEASE

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION (IURC)

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Governor Holcomb Proclaims April as Safe Digging Month

IURC reminds all Hoosiers to use safe digging practices as the weather warms

INDIANAPOLIS – Governor Eric J. Holcomb issued a proclamation today declaring April as Safe Digging Month in Indiana. The proclamation serves as a reminder that Hoosiers can help keep Indiana’s communities safe by contacting 811 in advance of any excavation project and by digging carefully.

“I’m grateful that Governor Eric Holcomb has proclaimed April as Safe Digging Month to help bring awareness to the importance of safe digging,” said IURC Chairman Jim Huston. “With more than 2,100 gas line damages happening in the state every year, it’s important to remember the potential consequences if safe digging practices are not followed. We encourage all Hoosiers, whether they are directly involved in professional excavation or planting a tree at their own home on the weekend, to learn more about the ‘Call Before You Dig’ law and their responsibilities to protect the buried utilities we rely on every day.”

Underground utilities may carry explosive gases, powerful electrical charges, critical data from hospitals and emergency service providers, high pressure water, and other products that, if damaged during excavation activities, can have serious, and in some cases deadly, consequences. Protecting these resources by properly training those who work near them protects the public and the excavator from serious injury or even death. Damages to utility lines are prevalent across the country – each year in Indiana alone, more than 2,100 natural gas lines are damaged.

To help raise awareness of safe digging practices among professional excavators and those connected to utility safety, the Commission is hosting seven underground utility Safety Days in March and April across the state. Safety Days are designed to educate participants on the “Call Before You Dig” law and will include both classroom-style segments and a live, mock gas line-strike demonstration with emergency response to show the dangers of a gas line damage. The third annual Safety Days, which are aimed at those involved in utility safety, including excavators, utility employees, locators, and emergency response professionals, have already been held in Evansville, Valparaiso, and Scottsburg, and will be held in the following communities over the next month: Columbus, Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Noblesville. More information about the events, including the link to register, specific locations, and general agenda for each day, can be found at www.IndianaSafetyDay.com.

The Commission also reminds those involved in utility safety that www.SafeDigIndiana.com is a free resource for professionals who work in excavation. The site includes training courses, which are open to any individual wanting to learn more about how the “Call Before You Dig” law and how the 811 system affects them. The Commission launched this first phase of training courses on national “811 Day” last year, and more courses are scheduled to be released in the coming months.

The website also includes a link for the Safe Dig Indiana | Local Grant application, launched last year, which helps local government employees attend training and education programs involving utility safety practices. The Safe Dig Indiana | Local Grant is intended to help ensure local governments can affordably provide quality training to their employees and, through education, facilitate engagement of local governments in broader regional and statewide underground facility safety networks. More information about the grant, including a list of approved training and education programs, can be found at www.SafeDigIndiana.com.

Funds for the Safety Days and online training system were allocated from the Underground Plant Protection Account (UPPA), which itself is funded through the penalties assessed to excavators and gas line operators who violate Indiana’s “Call Before You Dig” law. Per Indiana Code § 8-1-26-24, funds from UPPA may only be allocated to improve the safety of Indiana’s underground plant resources through:

- Public awareness programs concerning underground plant protection;
- Training and educational programs for contractors, excavators, locators, operators, and other persons involved in underground plant protection; and
- Incentive programs for contractors, excavators, locators, operators, and other persons involved in underground plant protection to reduce the number of violations

More information about the UPPA can be found [here](#), and more information about Indiana’s “Call Before You Dig” law can be found [here](#).

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The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (Commission) is a fact-finding body that hears evidence in cases filed before it and makes decisions based on the evidence presented in those cases. An advocate of neither the public nor the utilities, the Commission is required by state statute to make decisions that balance the interests of all parties to ensure the utilities provide safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates. The Commission also serves as a resource to the legislature, executive branch, state agencies, and the public by providing information regarding Indiana’s utilities and the regulatory process. In addition, Commission members and staff are actively involved with regional, national, and federal organizations regarding utilities issues affecting Indiana. For more information, please visit www.in.gov/iurc.