

State Reminds Hoosiers to Focus on Safety

INDIANAPOLIS (April 13, 2016) – April marks the beginning of the construction season – both at your home and on the roadway.

Governor Pence recently signed a proclamation declaring April 2016 as Safe Digging Month across Indiana. This month is dedicated to increasing awareness of safe digging practices and reminding homeowners and professionals when to contact 811. Nationwide, underground utility lines are damaged every six minutes because someone didn't contact 811.

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the Indiana Department of Labor (IDOL), the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC), the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) and Indiana 811 urge Hoosiers to make safety a priority for all professional and home projects.

By law, digging projects must begin with contacting Indiana 811. Installing a mailbox, building a deck and planting a tree are all examples of digging projects that should begin only after all buried facilities have been located and clearly marked with paint and/or flags. Homeowners are exempted from calling if they are digging on their own property with hand tools to a depth of 12 inches or less. However, striking a single buried utility can cause serious injury, death, expensive repair fees, fines and disruption of everything from running water to 911 services. The State of Indiana encourages all Hoosiers to call 811, no matter how small the digging project.

Hoosiers should make the call to 811 or visit www.811now.com at least two full working days prior to beginning a digging project. This will allow a professional locator to visit the property and mark the approximate locations of any buried utility lines in the project area free of charge. Remember that time, erosion or even tree roots can shift the locations of utility lines from year to year. Even if you think you know where your utilities are, always call before you dig.

Finally, if work is planned in a public right of way, contact the appropriate state or local agency to obtain a permit prior to starting the project. Remember, public right of way normally includes areas close to the road where sidewalks and utility poles are installed.

Pay Attention to Work Zones

Away from home and on the road, Hoosiers should pay special attention to roadway work zones. The Indiana Department of Transportation is investing more than \$850 million in more than 770 construction projects during 2016. INDOT is moving aggressively to modernize our state's infrastructure, and drivers will see more work on existing state highway roads and bridges. INDOT's goal is to maximize both the safety and mobility of motorists and workers while maintaining as much access as possible to businesses, residents and emergency services. Motorists can learn about highway work zones and other traffic alerts at indot.carsprogram.org, 1-800-261-ROAD (7623) or 511 from a mobile phone. Information about projects and restrictions is also available at www.in.gov/indot/div/construction or by [following INDOT on social media](#).

Give Construction Workers Space

Hardworking Hoosiers are on job sites throughout the state, working to build, repair and replace Indiana's utility and road infrastructure. Respect work zones established by contractors and be sure to slow down when in a construction area. In 2014 alone, 11 people were killed and more than 600 people were injured in Indiana highway work zones. Most of these injuries and deaths are caused by rear-end collisions, following too closely or making improper lane changes. We all play an important part in helping our fellow Hoosiers get home from the job site safe. Plan ahead and allow extra time while traveling in work zones.

Slow Down and Avoid Distractions

Roadway work zones leave no room for distractions and require attentive, cautious driving habits. Do not use cell phones while driving, especially in a work zone. Several studies show drivers using a phone are four times more likely to be in a crash. Other distractions, anything other than driving, can be just as dangerous.

Motorists face fines of up to \$1,000 for speeding, up to \$5,000 for driving recklessly or aggressively and up to \$10,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to six years for injuring or killing a worker. These fines are used to fund additional work zone patrols.

Both at home and away, Hoosiers should keep safety in mind. Together, we can keep our homes, streets and each other safe. For more information, visit www.Indiana811.org.

About the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)

INDOT is responsible for state roads, interstates and U.S. routes including adjacent overpasses and ramps. Local cities, counties and towns are responsible for all other roadways. INDOT's six districts across the state oversee maintenance and construction, including detours, traffic signals, signs and permits. Find your local INDOT district at entapps.indot.in.gov/dotmaps/districtmaps.

About the Indiana Department of Labor (IDOL)

The mission of the Indiana Department of Labor is to advance the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace. In order to make significant strides, we emphasize both enforcement and compliance assistance by employers. www.in.gov/dol

About the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC)

The IURC 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 IURC is required by state statute to make decisions that balance the public interest to ensure the utilities provide safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates. For more information, please visit www.in.gov/iurc.

About the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC)

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (www.oucc.IN.gov) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal commissions that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education and creative problem solving.

About Indiana 811

811 is the FCC-designated national three-digit number created to eliminate the confusion of multiple "Call Before You Dig" numbers across the country. The quick and efficient one-call service will notify the subscribing local utilities, which then send locating technicians to the requested site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines. The call is free of charge in Indiana.

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