



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Commissioner Brian Kalk 701-261-0373

Commissioner Randy Christmann 701-328-4082

Commissioner Julie Fedorchak 701-391-1140

**PSC, UTILITIES, CONTRACTORS TO HOST NEWS EVENTS
TO PROMOTE SAFE DIGGING**

Public Service Commissioners Brian Kalk, Randy Christmann and Julie Fedorchak joined leaders in the construction and utility industries to emphasize the potential dangers and consequences of digging without first calling North Dakota's Call-Before-You-Dig number, 811. They also outlined recent changes in state law to improve the program and increase penalties for violations.

Each year North Dakota's underground utility infrastructure is jeopardized by unintentional damage from those who fail to call 811 to have underground facilities located prior to digging. The consequences of striking an underground facility can be severe including explosions resulting in injury or death, service interruptions or damage to the environment.

"Spring is almost here and people are eager to start building, landscaping, gardening and other outdoor projects," Fedorchak said. "This is a reminder that anyone digging deeper than 12 inches, regardless of the size of the project, needs to call 811 and have the gas, electric, telephone and other underground infrastructure marked."

The process is simple. North Dakota law requires anyone conducting an excavation or demolition to notify 811 at least two days in advance of digging. Personnel will be sent to locate underground facilities at no cost to the caller, typically within a couple days. With recent legislative changes, the locates are valid for 21 days, compared to 10 days under previous law.

Commission Chairman Brian P. Kalk said, "811 is especially important this year with the seemingly never ending winter. People are going to be excited to start on yard projects and they need to take the proper steps to ensure their safety. The last thing I want is for someone to be injured or have to pay for damages that could have been avoided by calling 811."

Commissioner Randy Christmann said, "With increasing amounts of utilities buried out of sight, digging is becoming increasingly dangerous. We all have to remind ourselves to put caution ahead of convenience by calling before we dig."

The significant residential and business growth occurring throughout North Dakota and the increased demand for pipeline infrastructure to support the energy industry has dramatically increased demand for the One Call program. Calls from 811 to utilities requesting locates increased from 849,000 in 2011 to 1.1 million in 2012, a 36 percent increase.

The 2013 Legislature also increased penalties for violations of the One Call law. The Public Service Commission can now levy a fine up to \$25,000 per violation depending on severity. Another significant improvement to the program allows utility companies to charge for relocations. This is an effort to reduce duplicate requests for locating infrastructure on the same area of land.

Governor Jack Dalrymple proclaimed April as Safe Digging Month, which is endorsed by the North Dakota Public Service Commission, the Common Ground Alliance and the North Dakota One Call Board.

For more information about 811, visit the North Dakota One Call Board's website at www.ndonecall.com. For safety tips, best practices and other information, visit the Common Ground Alliance website at www.commongroundalliance.com.

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