

NEWS RELEASE
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North Dakotans Reminded to Call Before You Dig
Governor Burgum Proclaims Safe Digging Month in North Dakota

BISMARCK, ND – Governor Doug Burgum has proclaimed April as Safe Digging Month in North Dakota. In recognition, the North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) is reminding everyone of the potential dangers and consequences of digging without first calling 8-1-1, North Dakota’s Call-Before-You-Dig number.

"With nicer weather and many North Dakotans finding themselves at home because of COVID-19, some may feel inclined to work outdoors and engage in home projects," said Commission Chairman Brian Kroshus, who holds the damage prevention portfolio. "Whether commercial or residential excavation, be safe throughout the year and always contact North Dakota One Call before you dig. It's easy and it's the law."

North Dakota law requires anyone conducting an excavation to notify 8-1-1 at least two days in advance of digging. Personnel will be sent to mark the locations of the underground facilities, typically within a couple of days. The markings are valid for 21 days after they are placed. This process is coordinated through North Dakota One Call. The Public Service Commission’s role is to enforce the requirements of the state’s damage prevention laws and take action when violations are reported to the Commission. The PSC can levy a fine up to \$25,000 per violation depending on severity.

"It’s easier to call 811 before you dig, than 911 after you strike something dangerous," said Commissioner Julie Fedorchak.

Each year North Dakota’s underground utility infrastructure is jeopardized by unintentional damage from those who fail to call 8-1-1 to have underground facilities located prior to digging. Since 2009, the PSC has taken action in 229 cases related to violations of the Call-Before-You-Dig law. In total, approximately \$305,150 in fines have been assessed against companies or individuals who have violated the law. The consequences of striking an underground utility can be severe including explosions resulting in injury or death, service interruptions or damage to the environment.

"Following this simple process, which has been law in North Dakota for two decades, may prevent you from damaging facilities and getting fined. More importantly, it may save your life!" said Commissioner Randy Christmann.

The significant residential and business growth occurring throughout North Dakota and the increased demand for pipeline infrastructure to support the energy industry have dramatically increased demand for the One-Call Program.

Safe Digging Month is endorsed each April by the North Dakota Public Service Commission, the Common Ground Alliance and the North Dakota One-Call Board. For more information about 8-1-1, 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.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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