



Public Service Commission of West Virginia

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Public Service Commission Reminds DIYers that April is Safe Digging Month

Call 811 before digging to protect underground utility lines and yourself

As the welcome spring weather returns to our state, many residents are planning home and yard improvement projects. The Public Service Commission of West Virginia wants to remind Do-It-Yourselfers (DIYers) to call 811 before digging to ensure your safety and the integrity of the underground utility lines. If projects such as landscaping, installing a fence or mailbox, or building a deck or patio are in your spring plans, remember to call a few days before you dig, regardless of the depth you plan to dig or your familiarity with the property.

A recent survey by the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) found 51% of American homeowners who plan to dig for projects this year will put themselves and their communities at risk by failing to call 811 to learn the approximate location of underground utilities. Sixty-seven percent of the surveyed homeowners reported knowing that paint and flags are used to mark buried utilities, indicating that awareness of underground infrastructure among DIYers is high, even if their awareness of the importance of calling 811 before digging is relatively low. This national public opinion survey of 592 homeowners also found that homeowners will call 811 for some but not for all DIY landscape projects, including the following:

- 84 percent – Planting shrubs
- 63 percent – Planting a tree
- 61 percent – Installing a pole for a basketball goal
- 50 percent – Building a deck
- 46 percent – Installing a fence
- 45 percent – Digging a patio

The survey also identified top reasons why people do not plan to call 811 before digging. Fifty-six percent said that they felt they already knew where utilities were buried on their property, and 47 percent did not think they would dig deep enough to come in contact with utility lines, despite the fact that utility lines can sometimes be just a few inches below the surface because of erosion and other topography changes.

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Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities increases the likelihood of unintentional damage. This can cause serious injuries, service disruptions and repair costs. Everyone who calls 811 is connected to a local one-call notification center that will take the caller's information and communicate it to local utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint or flags. Once a site has been accurately marked, you can begin digging around the marked areas. In West Virginia, you can also call 800-245-4848 or visit www.WV811.com for more information. The Public Service Commission wants DIYers to remember to:

- Plan ahead. Call on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend, providing ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.
- Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.
- 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.

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