



**Contact: Bill Edge**  
Phone 404-656-2316  
www.psc.state.ga.us

## Georgia Public Service Commission

244 Washington St S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
Phone: 404-656-4501  
Toll free: 800-282-5813

**For IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**6-15**

### Commission Reminds Georgians That April Is National Safe Digging Month

ATLANTA, April 2, 2015 – The Georgia Public Service Commission reminds all Georgians that April is National Safe Digging Month. The law requires anyone who plans to excavate where underground utilities are located to call 8-1-1 before they dig. The process is simple and can prevent major damage that can endanger and inconvenience our communities and cause economic disruption. Damage from excavation activities to gas and water pipelines, along with sewer systems and buried distribution power lines, remains a leading cause of utility incidents resulting in death or injury.

Commission Chairman Chuck Eaton said, “We are pleased to work together with Georgia 811, our federal partners, and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) to prevent damages from occurring to the state’s underground utility facilities. Our common goals are to prevent the disruption of utility services and personal injuries that result from accidents which damage underground facilities.”

The Georgia Public Service Commission is charged with the enforcement of the state’s underground utilities damage prevention programs as a result of state legislation approved in 2000. The Commission also enforces federal pipeline safety standards under an agreement with the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. The Commission’s program is rated one of the top five in the nation and serves as a model for other states to follow in reducing damages to underground utilities.

Using these programs, the Commission provides training and education for excavators and utilities in order to avoid accidents that can cause expensive and often dangerous damage to buried utilities. The Commission also works closely with Georgia 811, Inc. which accepts calls from the national federally mandated “Call before You Dig” Number 8-1-1. This “one call” system is free to contractors and excavators as well as homeowners and helps all excavators comply with the law.

Commission Vice-chair Lauren “Bubba” McDonald said, “I want to remind anyone who excavates to call before you dig by placing a call to 8-1-1. It’s free and it’s the law. A simple phone call can prevent the disruptions and economic losses that can occur when underground utilities are damaged.”

“Calling 8-1-1 is the best way to prevent damage to our underground utilities,” said Commissioner Stan Wise, “Everyone loses when underground utilities are damaged.”

Commissioner Doug Everett added, “For those states that do not currently have a damage prevention program, I challenge them to follow Georgia’s lead and begin such a program because it is the right thing to do.”

“Excavators are only as good as the marks on the ground,” said Commissioner Tim Echols. “That is why calling before you dig is so important.”

“Every day underground utility lines are damaged in Georgia. Not only can these damages cause utility outages, they can also cause serious injuries or death. It is vital that Georgians contact Georgia 811 at least two days before digging to have their underground lines marked,” Georgia 811 President & CEO Claudette Campbell explains. “Contacting Georgia 811 is free and so is having your underground lines marked. For each person who contacts us about a digging project we notify on average 8 member utility companies. These members dispatch locate techs to mark underground lines.

The public, excavators and others can find resources available at [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) and at [www.Georgia811.com](http://www.Georgia811.com).

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a five-member constitutional agency that exercises its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas service from financially viable and technically competent companies. For more information on the Commission visit our web site at [www.psc.state.ga.us](http://www.psc.state.ga.us) .

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