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For IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

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Commission Reminds Georgians to Stay Safe by Calling 811 before Digging *April Is National Safe Digging Month*

ATLANTA, April 3, 2017 – The Georgia Public Service Commission joins with Governor Nathan Deal to remind 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 Stan Wise said, “Calling 8-1-1 is the best way to prevent damage to our underground utilities. Everyone loses when underground utilities are damaged. 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.

Commissioner 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.”

Commissioner Doug Everett added, “Calling before you dig is the right thing to do. Just one phone call can prevent untold damage to our underground utilities that can cause economic loss, traffic disruption and even loss of life.”

"Excavators are only as good as the marks on the ground," said Commission Vice-chair Tim Echols. "That is why calling before you dig is so important."

"Calling 811 before you dig is the law," said Commissioner Chuck Eaton. "One of our most important roles at the Commission is to educate everyone who excavates that protecting our underground infrastructure is vitally important."

Safe Digging month is particularly special this year as it also the 10 year anniversary of the nationwide rollout of 811 becoming the national three-digit number to call before digging," Georgia 811, Inc. President and CEO Claudette Campbell shares, "Anyone with any type of digging project should contact Georgia 811 at least two business days before beginning their work and with this easy to remember three-digit number, 811, it makes that even simpler."

The public, excavators and others can find resources available at www.call811.com and at 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 .

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