



NEWS RELEASE
GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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**PSC Adopts Rules To Strengthen Protection of Underground Utility Facilities in
Georgia**

ATLANTA – The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission), at its January 14, 2002 Administrative Session, adopted revised rules to strengthen its role in the protection of utility facilities in the state. The Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act of 2000 (O.C. G. A. § 25-1) provides for the protection of utility facilities from damage by excavation or blasting and gives the Commission the authority to enforce this law. The rule revisions will enable the Commission staff to assume primary responsibility to investigate reports of probable violations of the law.

Funding from the 2001 Georgia General Assembly enabled the Commission to establish a section within the Commission's Utilities Division that is devoted exclusively to investigating reported violations of the law. Prior to funding of this investigative division, an Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of facility owners and operators, excavators, the Utilities Protection Center and state and local officials conducted investigations of probable violations. Under the new rule, the Advisory Committee will review contested probable violations of the Act.

The PSC can fine violators of the law up to \$10,000 per violation. Since July 1, 2001, the Commission has levied \$41,500 in fines for violations of the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act.

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