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News Release

GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION PROGRAM PROTECTS PUBLIC SAFETY

ATLANTA, July 29, 2003 – The Georgia Public Service Commission’s (Commission) enforcement of a law that protects lives and property has resulted in more than a 30 percent reduction in utility disruption in the state over the past three years since lawmakers approved tough new changes in the utility facility protection laws.

Georgia’s “Call Before You Dig” law requires contractors, builders and property owners to locate pipelines, cables and other underground utilities before excavating with mechanized equipment. A free service, offered through the Georgia Utilities Protection Center (UPC), protects the vast underground infrastructure of pipelines, conduits and cables that are critical to Georgia businesses and residences. According to Commission Chairman Robert Baker, Jr., “Disruption of these utilities affects public safety, the environment and local economies.”

Beginning July 1, 2000, changes in the law gave the Commission new powers of enforcement with fines of up to \$10,000 per violation. Since enforcement of the program began, Atlanta Gas Light Company, BellSouth and Georgia Power have seen a joint reduction in damages to their pipelines and underground cables of 31.2 percent. Overall, damages have declined by a total of 4,000 incidents per year.

“The Commission is very pleased at the cooperation we have received from utilities such as Atlanta Gas Light, BellSouth and Georgia Power to reduce these damages to the utility infrastructure,” said Danny McGriff, Manger of Pipeline/Facilities Safety for the Commission. “We have worked closely with them to educate the public about the importance of calling before cranking up a backhoe. The reduction in damages has resulted in significant savings in terms of lost time and productivity while protecting public safety.”

The Commission and the UPC have worked closely with the utilities to educate the public, particularly developers and excavators, via free “Call Before You Dig” safety seminars, brochures, posters and other literature.

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