

## **PUC and South Dakota One Call remind all to dig safely**

Pierre, S.D. – The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission and the South Dakota One Call Board remind excavators and homeowners to call 811 before digging for their own safety as well as to protect utilities.

South Dakotans are required by law to call 811 at least 48 hours before digging. Following a call, the call center notifies utility company representatives in the dig vicinity so companies can mark the approximate location of underground lines with spray paint or flags. Once a site has been marked, it is safe to dig away from the marked line areas.

“It is essential for anyone planning a project involving digging to make the call to 811 well in advance,” said PUC Chairman Steve Kolbeck. “This applies not only to homeowners, but to contractors, fence builders, landscapers, and anyone digging within the state. The result of not calling 811 and paying attention to the line markings before digging can result in expensive fines and fees, harm to the individual digging, and even death. There is simply too much at stake by ignoring the 811 call and this law.”

“Our mission as a board is to protect personal safety and minimize damage to utility lines in our state,” said One Call Board President Bleau LaFave of NorthWestern Energy. “We continually remind those who excavate as part of their regular business routine as well as homeowners to follow safe digging practices. We have come a long way since the inception of the 811 number in 2005, but we must continue to get the word out to protect South Dakotans.”

In 2010, the South Dakota One Call Center received more than 112,000 locate requests. As a result, more than 597,000 locate tickets were issued to utilities to mark underground facilities.

According to Common Ground Alliance, an international association promoting damage prevention practices, the most popular homeowner digging projects are planting shrubs and trees, and digging in preparation of pouring concrete. These do-it-yourself projects could cause serious damage if the individual digging is not aware of the location of buried utilities. CGA advises homeowners planning weekend projects to call 811 on Monday or Tuesday to allow ample time for companies to mark lines in advance of digging.

Learn more about digging safety, including a proclamation by Gov. Dennis Daugaard naming April as Safe Digging Month in South Dakota, at [www.puc.sd.gov/safedigging](http://www.puc.sd.gov/safedigging).

Find out more about the South Dakota One Call program such as laws and color codes for marking lines at [www.SDOneCall.com](http://www.SDOneCall.com).