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APRIL IS "SAFE DIGGING MONTH"

— Excavators, Contractors and Homeowners: Call 811 Before Digging —

ALBANY —The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today announced that it is participating in the nationwide effort to recognize April 2015, as “Safe Digging Month” as a way to remind excavators and contractors that state law requires them to call one of the state's toll-free One-Call centers before starting any excavation or digging project. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo proclaimed April 2015 as “Safe Digging Month” in New York.

“It is important to raise awareness of the state's One-Call Notification Systems and the critical role it plays in identifying the location of underground infrastructure facilities,” said Commission Chair Audrey Zibelman. “Damage to utility facilities during excavation can result in loss of utility service, personal injury and property damage. I urge all excavators to do their part in protecting our vital infrastructure by simply dialing 811 before digging.”

The keys to preventing damage to underground facilities are the two “One-Call Notification Systems” that serve as communication links between contractors/excavators and the operators of underground facilities (local utilities/municipalities). New York 811 is the One Call Notification System serving New York City and Long Island and Dig Safely New York is the other, serving the remainder of the state. When calling from inside the areas served, either can be reached by simply dialing 811.

Along with participating in the nationwide Safe Digging Month program and Dig Safely New York, the Commission’s staff works diligently to enforce its gas safety regulations, which are among the most stringent in the nation, to ensure that utility companies adhered to them regarding the safe operation of the utility’s gas distribution system. To continue to improve gas safety, the Commission routinely monitors the utilities’ gas emergency plans to make sure that they are up to date, to identify

improvement areas, and to ensure that the plans are in compliance with the Commission's gas safety requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- When must notification be made? At least 2 to 10 working days prior to **any** mechanized work (does not include the date of the call) notice must be provided to the One-Call Notification System, which will transmit the project information to involved underground facility operators so that they can mark the location of any facilities at the excavation site.
- How is notification made? Notification for excavation work anywhere in the state can be made by dialing 811. Alternatively, for excavation on Long Island and the five boroughs of New York City, New York 811 can be called at 1-800-272-4480. For excavation elsewhere in New York State, Dig Safely New York can be called at 1-800-962-7962. Whether dialing the 1-800 number or 811, there is no charge for the call.
- What does excavation include? Excavation is defined in state law as "...movement or removal of earth, rock or other materials in or on the ground by use of mechanized equipment or by blasting, and includes, but is not limited to auguring; backfilling; drilling; grading; plowing in; pulling in; trenching and tunneling. Tools manipulated only by human or animal power and the tilling of soil for agricultural purposes shall not be deemed excavation."
- What is the excavator required to do if there are marked underground facilities at the worksite? Before using powered equipment near marked underground facilities, excavators are required to verify the location, depth, and direction of run of the facility by means of test holes dug by hand. A clearance of at least 4 inches must be maintained between powered equipment and the underground facility.
- Who must join the One-Call Systems? All operators of underground facilities, including municipal systems, are required to be members of the One-Call Notification System serving their area(s) and to mark the location of their facilities in or near excavation work sites.

Excavators who damage underground facilities due to the failure to follow the regulations are not only subject to civil penalties, but also are liable for repair costs. However, state law exempts excavators from liability for repair costs if the damage is caused by the utility's or municipality's failure to comply

with the law, such as failure to participate in the One-Call Notification Systems or failure to accurately mark the location of their underground facilities.

For more information about Dig Safely New York, go to www.digsafelynewyork.com or call 315-437-7394. For more information about New York 811, visit www.newyork-811.com or call 1-800-272-4480. For more information on 811, visit the www.call811.com Web site. If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.