

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nick Meyer

NIPSCO Communications Manager

(219) 647-6556

HELP AVOID A POTENTIAL DANGER BY CALLING 811 TWO DAYS BEFORE DIGGING

NIPSCO JOINS GOV. DANIELS IN RECOGNIZING SAFE DIGGING MONTH ACROSS INDIANA

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – Last year, Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) recorded 954 instances, or nearly three times per day, where an underground natural gas pipeline was unintentionally struck by a third-party contractor, homeowner or other outside party – a potentially dangerous accident that is avoidable. That’s why NIPSCO is joining Gov. Mitch Daniels and the Common Ground Alliance in recognizing April as Safe Digging Month across Indiana.

Safe Digging Month is dedicated to increasing awareness of safe digging practices across the country and promoting the use of the Indiana 811 call-before-you-dig phone number to help locate underground utility lines.

“Whether it’s a hired contractor beginning a large project or a homeowner working in their yard, NIPSCO wants everyone to stay safe by calling 811 before digging, “ said Mike Finissi, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for NIPSCO. “Since April and spring are busy times for digging projects, we want to remind our communities to call the 811 number at least two working days before starting projects involving digging to avoid possible injury, property damage and inconvenient outages.”

Of the 954 third-party hits recorded last year, 230 occurred in the South Bend area, 235 occurred in northwest Indiana and 303 took place in the Ft. Wayne area.

While the amount of dig-ins has been cut in half over the past five years, a majority of incidents occur without a call being made to locate the utility lines.

There are nearly 19 million miles of underground gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines across the country. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities increases the likelihood of an incident, which can cause serious injuries, service disruptions and repair costs.

Calling 811 is free and easy. Once a call is made, a professional utility line locator will visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with paint or flags. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging carefully around the marked areas.

Whether planting trees, building a deck, installing a mailbox or any other project that involves digging, NIPSCO and Indiana 811 offers the following recommendations for a busy digging season:

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STAY SAFE, CALL 811 BEFORE DIGGING

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- Always call 811 before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Tell neighbors, co-workers, family and friends about 811 if they discuss their plans for an outdoor home improvement project with you.
- Plan ahead – Indiana 811 is always open. Just make sure you call at least two working days in advance of your project start date.
- Avoid starting projects until you're sure all lines are marked. If you're unsure, confirm that all lines have been marked by contacting 811.
- Choose another location on the property for a project if the original planned site is near utility line markings.
- If your excavation is within two feet of the marked facility, only use hand tools with extreme caution.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that a call to 811 has been made. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.

Visit NIPSCO.com and www.indiana811.org for more information about 811 and the call-before-you-dig process.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the nine energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With more than 712,000 natural gas customers and 457,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in seven states. More information about NIPSCO is available at www.NIPSCO.com.

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