

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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AVOID GAS LEAKS AND OTHER SAFETY ISSUES BY CALLING 811 BEFORE DIGGING
Convenient, Free Service Used to Mark All Underground Utility Lines

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – Today marks the beginning of summer, and outdoor digging and construction projects are in full swing. To help you stay safe, NIPSCO encourages its customers, businesses and local communities to use the Indiana 811 call-before-you-dig phone number to help locate underground utility lines two days before any digging project begins.

This number is toll-free and there is no cost to have the underground lines marked for those who are planning to dig. Calling 811 is required by law, and a damage that occurs without such a call can result in civil penalties – even to homeowners.

Last year, NIPSCO recorded 860 instances, or nearly two and a half damages a 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.

“Digging blindly without knowing what’s underground is like driving down the road with your eyes closed,” said Mike Finissi, chief operating officer for NIPSCO. “So, no matter if it’s a homeowner doing digging work in their yard, or if it’s a hired contractor beginning a large project, we want everyone to stay safe by calling 811 before digging.”

Of the 860 third-party hits recorded last year, 138 occurred in the South Bend, Elkhart and Goshen area, 219 occurred in northwest Indiana, 183 took place in the Ft. Wayne area and the remaining hits were recorded in the company’s remaining central and southern service areas.

The number one cause of all damages is failing to make the call to 811 to have underground lines marked before digging.

However, the amount of dig-ins has progressively declined in the past five years as NIPSCO and Indiana 811 have worked to educate both individuals and contractors on the importance of damage prevention and using the 811 call before digging number through annual media campaigns and community events, direct mailings to excavators regarding safe digging practices and regular damage prevention meetings held across NIPSCO’s service area.

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.

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STAY SAFE, CALL 811 BEFORE DIGGING

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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. After the 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:

- 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. 811 will read a list of which companies should respond.
- 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 any marked facility, only use hand tools or vacuum excavation 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 Indiana811.org for more information about 811 and the call-before-you-dig process.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the seven energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With more than 786,000 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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