## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2013



## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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## Safe Digging Month Reminds Us to Put Safety Ahead of Shovels

Lake, Saint Joseph and Allen top counties for damages to NIPSCO gas lines in 2012

**MERRILLVILLE, Ind.** – In recognition of National Safe Digging Month, NIPSCO urges northern Indiana residents and businesses to put safety ahead of shovels by calling 811 at least two working days before starting any digging projects.

In 2012, there were more than 1,000 instances where NIPSCO's underground natural gas lines were struck by contractors, homeowners or other outside parties. Of the more than 30 counties served by the utility, the highest incidences of damages to NIPSCO gas lines in 2012 occurred in Lake, Saint Joseph and Allen Counties.

County	Number of Outside Party Hits to NIPSCO Gas Lines (2012)
Lake	213
Saint Joseph	198
Allen	191

One toll-free call to 811 gets all underground utility lines marked free of charge and helps avoid injuries, property damage and inconvenient outages. Calling 811 is required by law. Damage that occurs without such a call can result in civil penalties to homeowners and businesses alike.

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.

"NIPSCO has more than 18,000 miles of gas transmission and distribution pipelines and 1,900 miles of underground electric lines across northern Indiana," said Keith Wooldridge, senior vice president of field operations for NIPSCO. "Whether you're planting a garden or installing a fence, it's important to call 811 to find out what utilities might impact your next digging project."

NIPSCO and Indiana 811 offer the following recommendations for a busy digging season:

**WHO:** From homeowner to business, everyone is required to call 811 before digging. **WHAT:** One call to 811 gets your utility lines marked free of charge. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you'll be doing. Locate crews will arrive within two working days to mark all utility-owned underground lines, pipes and cables.

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**WHEN:** Whether planting a tree or garden, installing a mailbox or building a deck, every digging project, no matter how large or small, requires a call to 811 two working days before you dig.

WHERE: At home or the office, it's important to know what's below before you dig.

WHY: It helps you and your neighbors avoid injuries, property damage and inconvenient outages.

Visit <u>NIPSCO.com/811</u> or <u>Indiana811.org</u> 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.