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### **April declared Safe Digging Month**

PIERRE, S.D. – With spring in full swing, many South Dakotans are beginning to plan for outdoor and home improvements projects. If your spring projects include any digging, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission and South Dakota One Call Board remind you to always call before you dig.

To emphasize the importance of calling 811, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has declared April as Safe Digging Month in South Dakota. South Dakota law requires excavators and homeowners to contact South Dakota 811 at least two working days prior to beginning a digging project. This step gives professional locators time to mark appropriate underground utility lines and helps to minimize the damages and dangers of hitting these utilities.

“Whether you’re building an addition to your home, putting up a fence or planting a tree, it’s essential that excavators and homeowners take the time to call before you dig,” said PUC Chairperson Kristie Fiegen. “Service interruptions, environmental damage, costly repairs and serious injury are often the result of damaged utility lines. By simply calling 811, you can avoid and help prevent these accidents.”

South Dakotans are utilizing the South Dakota One Call program more than in years past. In 2016, the South Dakota One Call Center received more than 148,000 locate requests, an increase of more than 8,000 requests from 2015. These requests resulted in 826,000 locate tickets sent to utility companies across the state advising them to mark their underground facilities at excavation sites.

“Ensuring the safety of South Dakotans is our priority,” said South Dakota One Call Board Chairman Dan Kaiser, CenturyLink senior manager from Sioux Falls. “The 811 process is an effective way to ensure safe digging while preserving the integrity of underground utilities.”

South Dakota 811 is a free service. Homeowners and excavators must contact the South Dakota 811 center at least 48 hours before digging, excluding weekends and holidays. Contact the One Call center 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 811, submitting an electronic request through the [www.SD811.com](http://www.SD811.com) website or by using the free South Dakota 811 mobile app.

To learn more about 811 and safe digging practices and to download the free South Dakota 811 mobile app, visit [www.SD811.com](http://www.SD811.com).