



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Respect the law, call before you dig *Gov. Inslee proclaims April as Safe Digging Month*

OLYMPIA, Wash. – To protect personal safety and underground utility infrastructure, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission reminds residents to follow the law and call 811 before digging this spring.

Gov. Jay Inslee has issued a proclamation announcing April as Washington Safe Digging Month. The proclamation prompts state residents to call 811 before they dig into the ground to prevent injury, property damage, and inconvenient outages.

By calling 811 at least two business days before starting any digging projects, homeowners can obtain underground utility locates and better know what lies below. Failure to “Call Before You Dig” for garden, home improvement, and construction projects may result in damage to underground utility lines or pipes.

In 2017, 2,756 incidents of damage to underground utilities were reported in Washington. Nearly 39 percent of those incidents were caused by individuals digging without first getting underground utility locates. These potentially dangerous accidents can be prevented by planning ahead and calling 811.

The Utility Notification Center receives calls made to 811 and dispatches professional locators to physically mark utilities that exist beneath the excavation area. Once the locate is complete, remember to dig carefully around the marked areas with a hand tool. Buried electrical lines or natural gas pipes can be

dangerously close to the surface. Accidental contact with a shovel or backhoe is risky and potentially fatal.

Last year, Washington had 488,242 locate requests, an increase of more than 90,000 from 2016.

The UTC urges citizens who experience trouble with a utility locate—if the locate is late, incomplete, or inaccurate—to please call the UTC Consumer Help Line at 1-888-333-WUTC (9882).

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Editor's Note: A copy of Gov. Inslee's proclamation and more information on safe digging can be found at www.utc.wa.gov/safediggingmonth.