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Stay safe this spring and call before you dig

PIERRE, S.D. – Spring ushers in sunshine, longer days and more time spent outdoors. It also marks the beginning of a season of increased excavation activity. Homeowners who are looking to spruce up spaces with digging projects are urged to take an important first step and call before digging.

To emphasize the importance of calling before you dig, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has issued a proclamation declaring April as Safe Digging Month in South Dakota. By calling 811 prior to breaking ground on any project, homeowners and excavators can save time and money while remaining safe and connected.

Contacting 811 before digging is required by law. This simple phone call can help avoid service interruptions, damages to a utility and the environment, and even personal injury. Projects as simple as putting in a new mailbox or planting a tree should begin with a call to 811 to have underground utility lines marked.

The South Dakota One Call Notification Board is commemorating its 25th year as a state agency. Awareness and use of program has expanded exponentially since 811 was first introduced in South Dakota in 1993. “It’s really remarkable to think about how much the 811 program has grown in 25 years,” said John Ward, Chairman of the South Dakota One Call Board and the Division Manager for Excavating Specialists of Rapid City. “Certainly, more excavation is taking place given the development growth in our state. It’s satisfying to know that 811 provides a needed, useful and used service,” Ward said.

In 2017, the South Dakota 811 center fielded nearly 7,000 more locate requests than the previous year, for a total of nearly 155,000 requests received statewide. Those requests resulted in approximately 862,000 dispatches (36,000 more than 2016) being delivered to utility companies, directing them to mark their underground facilities at excavation sites.

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 South Dakota 811 Center 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 811 or submitting an electronic request through the www.SD811.com website.

The South Dakota 811 website is a valuable resource with complete information for homeowners, landowners and excavators. Learn more about 811 and safe digging practices at www.SD811.com.