



**For Immediate Release**  
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**ICC CONTACT:** Marianne Manko  
Office: (217) 782-5793  
Mobile: (217) 993-1000  
[mmanko@icc.illinois.gov](mailto:mmanko@icc.illinois.gov)

## **The Illinois Commerce Commission Joins Governor Bruce Rauner, Supporting April as Safe Digging Month Call 811 Before You Dig**

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), in concurrence with Governor Bruce Rauner, recognizes April as *Safe Digging Month* in Illinois, a statewide public safety and education campaign to increase awareness about the importance of calling 811 before starting outdoor projects in order to locate underground utility lines. This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary for *National Safe Digging Month*. The Governor's proclamation highlights the importance of the "Call 811" initiative to reduce the risk of striking underground utility lines, causing environmental or property damage, costly delays or personal injury.

811 is a convenient three-digit phone number to reach either JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) across most of Illinois, or DIGGER within the City of Chicago. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, free of charge.

An underground utility line is damaged during a digging project once every six minutes. Illinois law requires homeowners and professional excavators to call 811 before starting an outdoor project at least 48 hours (or two business days) in advance. Installing a mailbox, building a deck and planting a tree or garden are examples of digging projects that require the 811 call to order utility companies to locate the underground lines they own with color-coded markings. The digging project must begin within 14 calendar days from the call, and locate requests have a 28-day life.

"No precaution to secure the safety of gas, telecommunications or other underground utilities is too small," said ICC Chairman Brien J. Sheahan. "Striking a gas line can cause serious injury, even death. A damaged telecommunications line could halt 911 service to an entire community. Safe Digging Month underscores a critical safety message that is relevant throughout the year."

Homeowners and professional excavators who fail to “Call 811” before digging cause approximately 40 percent of all damages, making it the top cause of these dangerous and costly incidents. This statistic jumps to 60 percent for landscaping and fence-building projects.

Calling 811 can potentially save property owners and excavators tens of thousands of dollars in damages and penalties. In 2016, ICC staff issued 53 warnings and 45 citations for safe digging violations resulting in \$50,000 in penalties. Violations issued to excavators and homeowners included not having a valid locate request or not digging carefully around marked underground utility facilities, and for utilities, failure to mark their facilities in a timely manner. The ICC levied penalties as part of its One-Call enforcement efforts.

For more information *Safe Digging Month* and the “Call 811” process visit:

The Common Ground Alliance website: <http://commongroundalliance.com/damage-prevention/toolkits/811-campaign>

JULIE’s website: [www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com)

DIGGER’s website: <https://ipi.cityofchicago.org/Digger>

To view Governor Rauners proclamation, click [here](#).

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#### ***About the Illinois Commerce Commission***

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is a quasi-judicial body made up of five Commissioners. Through its Public Utility Program, the Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Through its Transportation Regulatory Program, the Commission oversees public safety and consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses and repossession agencies. The Commission’s Rail Safety Program also inspects and regulates the general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the state.

To learn more about the Commission, its offices and bureaus, click [here](#). If you are a consumer who needs help resolving a utility dispute call 800-524-0795 or file an online complaint [here](#). For a complaint related to transportation, call 217-782-6448.

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