



Putting Safety First: Today's Date a Reminder to Call MISS DIG811 Three Days before Digging

AUBURN HILLS, Mich., August 11, 2016 – Today's date on the calendar – 8-11 – is a ready-made reminder for homeowners and contractors who have digging projects planned this summer and fall to call MISS DIG811 first, then dig safely. The safety of customers, the public and utility employees is our top priority.

“When homeowners contact MISS DIG811 before digging, wait for utilities to be located and then practice safe digging, the chances of hitting a buried line are reduced to less than one percent,” said Bruce Campbell, CEO of MISS DIG811, Michigan's one-call utility notification system. “We work continuously with our partners – including Consumers Energy, DTE Energy and SEMCO – to ensure that Michigan's residents are safe by calling MISSDIG811 prior to digging.”

Accidentally striking a buried utility line can result in injuries as well as damage and loss of service. MISS DIG811 is a one-call service that will notify utilities to dispatch crews to mark underground utility lines with flags and/or paint in the area you plan to dig. The service is fast, free, and required by law.

While MISS DIG811 homeowner staking requests are up six percent year-to-date at Consumers Energy, there have been more than 130 homeowner-caused damages, with 85 percent of resulting from no call to 811. The numbers are similar at DTE Energy, with homeowner-caused damages totaling 124 incidents so far this year – 86 percent attributed to not contacting

MISS DIG811 prior to excavation. SEMCO Energy has had 36 homeowner damages with 81 percent of those attributed to no 811 contact prior to digging.

A free and simple call to MISS DIG811 at 811 or online at <http://elocate.missdig811.org> at least three business days before beginning any digging project will help ensure the safety of those performing the work and the integrity of underground utilities such as natural gas, electric, cable and water, Campbell said.

Typical homeowner projects that should prompt advance contact to MISS DIG811 include the installation of landscaping, decks and fences. Due to erosion and changes in soil grade, some utilities may be buried more closely to the surface than anticipated, and could be damaged when using a shovel or other hand equipment for projects like planting small shrubs and even flowers.

Other safe digging tips for homeowners include:

- **Plan your job.** Confirm all underground facilities have been marked before you dig by checking Positive Response by calling 811 or visiting <http://response.missdig811.org>.
- **Once underground lines have been marked,** dig with care -- using only hand tools if digging within 48 inches of the marks until the location and depth of the facility is determined.
- **If using power equipment to excavate** within 48 inches of a marked area, state law requires that hand tools be used first to carefully expose the marked facility to determine exact location and depth.
- **If you contact or damage a utility line,** contact the utility owner immediately. If the damage results in a dangerous situation, call 911.
- **Teach children** to leave the colored staking flags in the ground so safe digging can occur.

To help emphasize the safe digging message, MISS DIG811's mascot will throw out the ceremonial first pitch tonight, Aug. 11, at the West Michigan Whitecaps vs. Lansing Lugnuts minor league baseball game at 7 p.m. in Comstock Park. DTE Energy is a promotional sponsor for the game.

"The Dig Safely partners encourage all contractors and homeowners to ensure they contact MISS DIG811 and always use safe digging practices to help ensure their safety as well as that of utility employees and the general public," Campbell said.

Formed in 1970, MISS DIG811 was the first statewide damage prevention notification system in the U.S. and has received over 21 million locate requests to date.

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For more information, the media may contact:

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SEMCO: Steve Makowski, 810-887-4233