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Survey reveals nearly 40 percent of homeowners who plan to dig this year will put themselves and others at risk by not calling 811 before starting

Making a free call to 811 before digging for home improvement projects – including landscaping or installing a mailbox – can prevent damage to underground utility lines and keep communities safe

WASHINGTON (April 2, 2018) – In observance of National Safe Digging Month in April, the Common Ground Alliance today announced results from a recent national survey. The results revealed that **36 percent of homeowners** who plan to dig this year for projects like landscaping, installing a fence or mailbox, or building a deck, pond or patio and other DIY projects, **will put themselves and their communities at risk by not calling 811** a few days beforehand to learn the approximate location of underground utilities.

Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in serious injuries, service disruptions and costly repairs when gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines are damaged.

The national public opinion survey of homeowners conducted in February by the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the national association dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, also revealed that **47 percent of homeowners who plan to dig this year have no experience with the 811 process**. The most popular planned projects cited among surveyed homeowners include:

- Planting a tree or shrub (63 percent)
- Building a fence (35 percent)
- Building a patio or deck (28 percent)
- Installing a mailbox (16 percent)

“Tens of millions of Americans plan to do DIY digging projects this year, but according to our survey, 36 percent of them admit that they will not call 811 beforehand, which puts homeowners and their communities at risk,” said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president and CEO of CGA.

“Calling 811 a few days before any planned home improvement projects that require digging – even something as simple as installing a mailbox or planting a tree – is critical to preventing incidents like service outages and serious injuries.”

CGA's 1,700 members, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and most governors have proclaimed April as National Safe Digging Month to bring extra attention to the issue of underground utility line safety and reduce the risk of unnecessary infrastructure damage.

As part of National Safe Digging Month, CGA encourages homeowners to take the following steps when planning a digging project this spring:

- Always call 811 a few days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Plan ahead. Call on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend, providing ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.
- Confirm that all lines have been marked.
- Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that a call to 811 has been made. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.
- Visit www.call811.com for complete info.

An underground utility line is damaged once every nine minutes nationwide because someone decided to dig without first calling 811, according to industry data collected by CGA. There are more than 20 million miles of underground utilities in the United States, per data compiled by CGA from various industry groups. That figure equates to more than one football field's length (105 yards) of buried utilities for every man, woman and child in the U.S.

Everyone who calls 811 a few days before digging is connected to a local one call notification center that will take the caller's information and communicate it to local utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint, flags or both. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

About the study

SSRS conducted a national omnibus phone study between Feb. 21-25, 2018, on behalf of CGA. A total of 621 American homeowners ages 18+ were asked for their opinions on home and property improvement project topics. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3.71% at the 95 percent confidence level.

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