INCIDENT Response Talking Points (AFFECTED PARTY)

When a utility is damaged and it affects the lives of people in the community, the media will reach out to the parties involved for a quote about the incident. It is important to address the current situation and steps being taken to fix the problem. Although this incident may not have been caused by a failure of the excavator to call 811, consider using this opportunity to educate the general public that incidents like these can be prevented by calling 811 prior to all digging projects.

Please take a moment to review the following 811 talking points. Although you may already feel comfortable with the 811 message, it’s imperative to review these points so you can incorporate them into your answers. Whenever possible, please localize your message to reflect stakeholder support of 811.

Key points for all interviews:

* Every digging project requires a call to 811.
* Calling 811 at least [Insert notification period] prior to digging notifies utility companies of the intent to dig and gives representatives time to mark the appropriate lines.

What is 811?

* 811 is the national number designated by the Federal Communications Commission to prevent the unintentional strike of underground utility lines while digging.

Who should call 811?

* Everyone! Homeowners and professional excavators alike need to call prior to all digging projects — large or small.

Why should people call 811?

* Ensuring that the approximate location of underground utility lines are clearly marked before digging reduces the risk of striking a line, which can lead to serious injuries, disrupted service to an entire community, and potential fines and repair costs.

How does 811 work?

* 811 can be called from anywhere in the country.
* A representative from your local one-call center will answer the call to determine the location and description of the digging site.
* The affected utility companies will be notified of the intent to dig.
* The utility companies will each send a professional locator to the digging site to identify and mark the approximate location of the underground lines.
* When lines have been marked, you are free to dig carefully around the marks.

When should someone call 811?

* Lines need to be marked for each separate project, such as installing a rural mailbox, putting up a fence, planting trees or building a deck.
* Call at least [Insert notification period] prior to digging to allow time for professional locators to mark the approximate location of utility lines.
* Even if you’ve hired a contractor, make sure the contractor calls 811 to have lines marked.

What happens if you don’t call?

* Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.
* Hitting an underground utility line while digging can cause serious injuries, disrupt service to entire neighborhoods, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Who is behind 811?

* The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), a leading association created to prevent damage to the underground utility infrastructure and ensure public safety and environmental protection, promotes 811 along with organizations from 16 stakeholder groups.

Where can you learn more about 811?

* To learn more about 811, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

#### 

#### INCIDENT RESPONSE NEWS RELEASE (UNAFFECTED PARTY)

#### [Insert Company Logo]

**Media Contact:**

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

[STAKEHOLDER] reminds local residents to call 811 Before all digging projects

*Incident in [location] serves as reminder of vast web of buried utilities that lie beneath the surface*

**[CITY, STATE ABBREVIATION]** (Month XX, 2018) — In light of the recent [description of incident] incident in [City, State], [Insert stakeholder] would like to remind [state] residents that it is important to call 811 at least [Insert state notification period] before digging to have underground utility lines marked. One free call to 811 can help prevent an unfortunate incident like the one in [City, State].

Striking a single line can cause injury, repair costs, fines and inconvenient outages. Residents are responsible for having lines marked before they dig, whether it’s for a large project, such as building a deck, or a small one, such as planting a tree.

Callers to 811 are connected to [Local one-call center], which notifies the appropriate utility companies of the caller’s intent to dig. Professional locators are sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags or spray paint. Once lines have been properly marked, digging can begin around the marked lines.

The depth of utility lines can vary for a number of reasons, such as erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surface. Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.

“In light of the recent incident in [location], [Insert stakeholder] would like to remind residents that one simple call to 811 will help homeowners, contractors and do-it-yourself diggers avoid striking an underground utility line,” said XXX, XXX [Insert stakeholder representative’s name and title here]. “It’s the simplest step residents can take to protect themselves and their communities.”

Visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) for more state information about 811 and the call-before-you-dig process.

# # #

#### MEMORIAL DAY NEWS RELEASE

#### 

#### [Insert Company Logo]

**Media Contact:**

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

Memorial day Weekend serves as A CONVENIENT REMINDER to always call 811 Before DigGing

*Stakeholder encourages residents to make a free call # of days before digging to know what’s below*

**City, STATE (May 21, 2018)** – Stakeholder wants to remind state homeowners to call 811 by Tuesday/Wednesday to ensure all underground utilities are properly marked before breaking ground on their Memorial Day weekend digging project. Striking a single line can cause injury, repair costs, fines and inconvenient outages.

When calling 811, homeowners and contractors are connected to state one call, which notifies the appropriate utility companies of their intent to dig. Professional locators are then sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags or spray paint.

Every digging project, regardless of depth, warrants a call to state one call. Installing a mailbox, building a deck, planting a tree and laying a patio are all examples of digging projects that should include a call to 811 before they begin.

The depth of utility lines can vary for a number of reasons, such as erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surfaces. Utility lines need to be properly marked because even when digging only a few inches, the risk of striking an underground utility line still exists.

“Since Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer, we remind homeowners and contractors alike to call 811 before digging to eliminate the risk of striking an underground utility line,” said stakeholder name, stakeholder title and company. “As state residents plan for projects for the first long weekend of the year, we ask that 811 be an important part of their planning process.”

Visit (state one call website) for more information about 811 and safe digging practices.

# # #

#### CLEAN UP CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE

**Don’t Make the Problem Worse after the Storm – Call 811**

Contributed by: [Insert full name, Title of stakeholder executive]

If the recent [type of storm] storm in the [location] area caused damage to your property, one important phone number can help you avoid another major problem during the clean up process. If you plan to dig as part of your storm clean up, please be sure to call 811 at least [notification period] beforehand.

Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811. Striking a single utility line during storm clean up can lead to personal injury, penalties, repair costs, and expensive and inconvenient outages.

When you call 811, you will speak with a [Local one call center] representative who will take the location and description of the project site and notify affected utility companies. Utility companies will then each send a professional locator to mark the approximate location of utility lines. Once lines have been marked, you can begin to carefully clean up around marked lines.

Safety is a shared responsibility, and calling 811 helps protect you, your family and neighbors from utility line damages and helps keep your community safe and connected.

For additional information regarding safe digging practices, please call 811 or visit [www.call811.com](file:///C:\Documents%20and%20Settings\kcahill\Local%20Settings\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\Local%20Settings\Users\Khrysanne\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\AWhite\Desktop\www.call811.com).

#### STORM CLEAN UP PRESS RELEASE

#### Media Contact:

NAME

Phone Number

Email Address

[STAKEHOLDER NAME] ADVISES RESIDENTS to CALL 811 BEFORE DIGGING AS CLEAN UP FROM [NAME OF STORM] BEGINS

*A free phone call a few days before digging helps identify approximate location of underground utility lines*

**CITY, STATE (MONTH, X, 2018)** – In light of the recent devastation caused by [NAME OF STORM], the [NAME OF TOWN] community will be coming together to clean up and rebuild in the coming weeks.

During this time, one important phone number can help residents from adding to complications during the clean up process. For any clean up that involves digging or removing trees from the ground, [STAKEHOLDER] reminds professional excavators and homeowners alike to call 811 at least two full business days before they start to dig.

Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811. Striking a single utility line during hurricane clean up or any other time can lead to personal injury, penalties, repair costs, and expensive and inconvenient outages.

When residents call 811, they will speak with a [ONE CALL CENTER] representative who will take the location and description of the project site and notify affected utility operators. These utilities will then send professional locators to mark the approximate locations of their lines. Once these lines have been marked, residents can begin to carefully clean up around the marked lines. This number is not to be used to report utility service outages.

“In the aftermath of devastation, we must remember that safety is a shared responsibility, and calling 811 helps protect the people who dig and entire communities,” said [NAME OF SPOKESPERSON]. “It’s one easy phone call that will help make sure a difficult situation isn’t made worse.”

For additional information regarding safe digging practices, please call 811 or visit [www.call811.com](file:///E:\Documents%20and%20Settings\cmcmurry\Local%20Settings\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Users\Khrysanne\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Users\Khrysanne\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\AWhite\Desktop\www.call811.com).

# # #

#### GENERIC 811 ARTICLE

**Know What’s Below – Always Call 811 Before You Dig**

There are nearly 20 million miles of underground utility lines in the United States. These buried facilities, including gas, water, sewer, cable TV, high-speed Internet, landline telephone and electric, provide the services Americans depend on for their basic everyday needs.

If you are planning a job that requires digging, even if you plan to hire a professional, a call to 811 is required before you begin working. 811 is a free, FCC-designated national one call number that connects a caller from anywhere in the country to the appropriate local one call center. The one call center will then alert the appropriate underground facility owners so they can dispatch locators to mark the approximate location of their lines with paint or flags.

Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811. Also, according to a recent Common Ground Alliance survey 45 percent of people who plan to dig this year will not call 811 first, despite there being 100 billion feet of utility lines buried underground in the United States.

Unintentionally striking a line can result in inconvenient outages for entire neighborhoods, harm to yourself or your neighbors, and repair costs.

Every digging project, no matter how large or small, warrants a call to 811. Installing a mailbox, building a deck and planting a tree or garden are all examples of digging projects that should only begin a few days after making a call to 811.

Here’s how it works:

1. One free, simple phone call to [811](http://www.call811.com/default.aspx) makes it easy for your local one-call center to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig.

2. Call a few days prior to digging to ensure enough time for utility lines to be properly marked.

3. When you call 811, a representative from your local one-call center will ask for the location and description of your digging project.

4. Your local one-call center will notify affected utility companies, who will then each send a professional locator to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines.

5. Once lines have been properly marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the marked areas.

To find out more information about Call 811 or the one-call utility notification center in your area, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com/default.aspx).

#### GENERIC 811 OP-ED

**Know What’s Below – Always Call 811 Before You Dig**

There are nearly 20 million miles of underground utility lines in the United States. These buried facilities, including gas, water, sewer, cable TV, high-speed Internet, landline telephone and electric, provide the services Americans depend on for their basic everyday needs.

If you are planning a job that requires digging, even if you plan to hire a professional, a call to 811 is required before you begin working. 811 is a free, FCC-designated national one-call number that connects a caller from anywhere in the country to the appropriate local one-call center, which in this area is [one-call center name].

[One-call center name] will then alert the affected underground facility owners so they can dispatch locators to mark the approximate location of their lines with paint or flags.

Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.

Unintentionally striking a line can result in inconvenient outages for entire neighborhoods, harm to yourself or your neighbors, and costly repairs.

Every digging project, no matter how large or small, warrants a call to 811. Installing a mailbox, building a deck and planting a tree are all examples of digging projects that should only begin after you have waited at least [notification period] after calling and confirmed that all facility owners in your area have either marked their lines or declared the area clear of any lines.

Here’s how it works:

1. One free, simple phone call to [811](http://www.call811.com/default.aspx) makes it easy for [one-call center name] to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig.

2. Call [notification period] prior to digging to ensure enough time for utility lines to be marked accurately.

3. When you call 811, a representative from [one-call center name] will ask for the location and description of your digging project.

4. [One-call center name] will notify affected utility companies, which will then send professional locators to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines.

5. Once lines have been accurately marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the marked areas.

Make a phone call, not a judgment call. Learn more about 811 at [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com/default.aspx) and keep your project safe for you and your community.

Name

Title

Organization Name

#### TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Prior to any media interviews, please take a moment to review the following 811 talking points. Although you may already feel comfortable with the 811 message, it’s imperative to review these points so you can incorporate them into your answers. Whenever possible, please localize your message to reflect stakeholder support of 811.

Key points for all interviews:

* Every digging project requires a call to 811.
* Calling 811 at least [Insert notification period] prior to digging notifies utility companies of the intent to dig and gives representatives time to mark the appropriate lines.

What is 811?

* 811 is the national number designated by the Federal Communications Commission to prevent the unintentional strike of underground utility lines while digging.

Who should call 811?

* Everyone! Homeowners and professional excavators alike need to call prior to all digging projects — large or small.

Why should people call 811?

* Ensuring that the approximate location of underground utility lines are clearly marked before digging reduces the risk of striking a line, which can lead to serious injuries, disrupted service to an entire community, and potential fines and repair costs.

How does 811 work?

* 811 can be called from anywhere in the country.
* A representative from your local one-call center will answer the call to determine the location and description of the digging site.
* The affected utility companies will be notified of the intent to dig.
* The utility companies will each send a professional locator to the digging site to identify and mark the approximate location of the underground lines.
* When lines have been marked, you are free to dig carefully around the marks.

When should someone call 811?

* Lines need to be marked for each separate project, such as installing a rural mailbox, putting up a fence, planting trees or building a deck.
* Call at least [Insert notification period] prior to digging to allow time for professional locators to mark the approximate location of utility lines.
* Even if you’ve hired a contractor, make sure the contractor calls 811 to have lines marked.

What happens if you don’t call?

* Every nine minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.
* Hitting an underground utility line while digging can cause serious injuries, disrupt service to entire neighborhoods, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Who is behind 811?

* The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), a leading association created to prevent damage to the underground utility infrastructure and ensure public safety and environmental protection, promotes 811 along with organizations from 16 stakeholder groups.

Where can you learn more about 811?

* To learn more about 811, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

#### MEDIA RELATIONS 101

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is requesting the support of its stakeholders in spreading the word to local media, and therefore consumers, about safe digging throughout the year. CGA has created this document as a guide to help support local outreach efforts, which will be accomplished through media relations surrounding the following themes:

* National Safe Digging Month – CGA has designated April as National Safe Digging Month to raise awareness about safe digging during a concentrated time period to maximize impact and media coverage.
* 8/11 Day – CGA has designated August 11 as 8/11 Day due to the natural connection of the date on the calendar to the 811 phone number as a hook for initiatives and events that can attract media coverage.
* Seasonal safe digging reminders – Each season brings a perfect opportunity to remind the media, and therefore the general public, of the importance of calling 811 before digging projects or seasonal maintenance.

Generating local news coverage is one of the most effective ways to raise public awareness about 811 and safe digging practices. CGA recognizes that not all stakeholders are familiar with how to pitch local media, so we have put together this media relations document to support your local outreach efforts. It is important to remember that all template material should be localized to each specific market.

**Securing Local Media Coverage**

**Before contacting the media**

With recent buyouts and layoffs in the media, it’s more important than ever to do your research before contacting a reporter or producer. Your story will be no good if it doesn’t make it into the right hands. The following are tips to help you identify the right contact for your story:

* **Print** – Before reaching out to newspapers or magazines read the last few issues of the publication to determine which reporter has been covering topics related to the news you are sharing. (Typically home improvement, gardening and feature reporters would be interested in your news.) If you’re unable to determine a specific reporter, contact the newsroom or editor to determine the appropriate contact. These phone numbers should be available on the publication’s website. Once you have determined the appropriate reporter, send him/her a personal email with your story idea and how it affects the publication’s readers.
* **Broadcast** – Before contacting television and radio, visit the station’s website to determine the newsroom email address and phone number. Morning and weekend newscasts are great for feature stories, so look for the contact information for a morning show or weekend producer, and make a point to send him/her your news/event information. Additionally, search the website for any shows that would benefit from your information, (i.e. gardening shows, outdoor home improvement expert shows or how-to shows).
* **Syndication** (Associated Press) – Visit <http://www.ap.org/pages/contact/contact.html> to determine to whom to fax your story idea.
  + Once on the webpage, go to “AP Bureaus” (on the right hand side), select your state and hit “go.” A list of AP offices will appear. Contact the bureau closest to you.

**Distributing the information**

Once you have determined the appropriate contact, you will need to email (or fax the AP office) your news. Below are a few things to keep in mind:

* **General Pitching**
* Keep emails to reporters and editors short, direct and concise.
* Reference his/her recent story to show you’ve done your homework and make them more willing to work with you.
  + i.e. Hi John, I recently read your article entitled, “Bailing out the Environment.” I found it very insightful and helpful to homeowners and do-it-yourselfers. I wanted to pass along a reminder that DIYers need to call 811, the national call-before-you-dig-number, before bailing out the environment this Arbor Day and Earth Day. It is imperative that this number is called to ensure utility lines are properly marked to prevent injury and damages from digging.
* Create a catchy subject line to ensure they will open and read your email.
* Make sure your contact information is in the body of the email.
* Include your website and offer for them to speak with someone.
* Do not send an email blast to all reporters; it is typically flagged as spam. Rather, take the time to send a personal email to each reporter. It pays off.
* **Press Release and Media Advisory Distribution**
* Send a media advisory — the who, what, where, and when of an event — one week prior to the event, inviting the media to attend and letting them know to mark their calendars.
* Send a press release the day of the event.
* Paste press releases into the body of the email. Do not send attachments, such as photos, until the reporter requests them, because they are often flagged as spam.
* **Byline Column Pitching**
* Send the reporter a personal e-mail asking if you are able to submit a byline article for a spring issue. In this email, include a brief overview of the article and why this news is timely.
* If he/she is interested in receiving the byline article, attach the byline to a brief email thanking the reporter for the opportunity, and ask when the article is scheduled to run.
  + - Be prepared to also provide a headshot and bio of the person the article is attributed to.
* Qualify a few things:
  + - Length of article
    - Photo requirements

**Following up with the media**

Two days after emailing or faxing the media, it is important to place a follow-up call to ensure the media received your information and to encourage them to cover your story. Below are recommended times to contact or avoid the media.

* Broadcast (Television and Radio) – Avoid calling weekdays from 6-9 a.m., 12-1 p.m., 5-7 p.m., as most stations are in the middle of live programming during these times.
* Print (Newspaper and Magazine) – Do call Monday-Wednesday between 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 2-4 p.m. Do not call on Thursdays, as reporters are typically on deadline. Do call Fridays, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

**How to pitch TV, radio or print reporters**

* **Preparing to pitch**
  + Reporters are interested in hearing about stories with local angles. Be prepared to share your story idea in a brief, succinct explanation that includes only the most relevant details. Important details to include:
    - Your name and organization
    - Date and time
    - What makes the event timely
    - A few highlights of the event
    - Availability of B roll (video footage) demonstrating the call-before-you-dig process
    - Availability of experts for in-studio segments and live interviews
* **Speaking to the reporter** 
  + When calling television and radio newsrooms, ask to speak with a morning show producer or weekend producer.
  + When calling newspapers and magazines, ask to be connected to the reporter you to which you sent your information.
  + Once you have been connected to the right person, state your name and company.
  + **Ask the reporter if he/she is on deadline, and if they have a moment to discuss a local story idea. This is out of respect for their time, and they will appreciate you asking!**
  + Be prepared to share the top line details of your event/announcement in 10 seconds. Example:
    - Joe: “Hi Kate, this is Joe Smith with XXX. Are you on deadline, or do you have a minute to talk about a local story idea?”
    - Kate: “I have a second, go ahead.”
    - Joe: “XXX has just announced that it is supporting National Safe Digging Month throughout all of April by educating local students on safe digging practices. By getting in front of students at a young age, we teach the importance of having utility lines marked prior to digging to prevent damages and injury. Would you be interested in speaking to a local representative from XXX about this effort and National Safe Digging Month in general?”
  + Offer him/her access to B roll demonstrating the call-before-you-dig process. (B roll is a great supplemental tool for TV because it adds value to segments without incurring additional work for the film crew. It also controls the safe digging message. B roll can be used during in-studio interviews or interviews that take place in the field. Check out the miscellaneous tools folder for a B roll order form).
* **If the reporter agrees to cover the event**
  + Follow-up your phone conversation by sending an email to the reporter confirming the event details, your contact information, interview times, location, names and titles of participants, as well as confirming when the story is scheduled to run.

**Day of interview**

Keep in mind, if there is breaking news, the media may decide not cover your event/interview at the last minute. It is a good idea to prep your team members/spokespersons on this to better manage expectations. When dealing with the media, there is no guarantee anything will happen until it actually does. Below are the basic Dos and Don’ts of speaking with the media.

* **Do** 
  + Designate a staff person to assist the reporter with on-site interviews and provide company information for the reporter. If a staff member is not available to attend an interview, send the reporter company/one call center materials ahead of time.
  + Be calm and take charge of the situation. Remember, you have the information they want!
  + Review 811 messages as a refresher prior to the interview.
  + Speak slowly, directly, and concisely.
  + Be positive!
* **Don’t**
  + Don’t repeat a reporter’s negative question/statement. Instead, rephrase the question and turn it into a positive.
    - Reporter: “It seems to be a hassle to call every time, even when digging only a few feet.”
    - Response: “You’re responsible for calling every time because the depth of utility lines can vary due to a number of factors, such as erosion and uneven surfaces. Some lines are only a few inches from the surface, making it extremely important to call for shallow digging. Calling will only take a few minutes of your time, and it can save you from injury or damage.”
  + Don’t ever say “no comment.”
    - It’s perfectly acceptable to refuse to answer a question that you’re unsure about or do not feel comfortable answering. Remember, YOU are in control of the interview.
    - Never speculate. If you don’t know, say, “I’m not positive on that answer, and I don’t want to speculate, so let me find out and get back to you.”
    - The PR person should be responsible for following up with the reporter to provide this information.
* Don’t speak “off the record.”
  + - Nothing is ever off the record. Even flip remarks.
    - If you don’t want something published, don’t say it.
    - Reporters can use anything you say during an interview.
    - No matter how friendly the interview is, remember you are ALWAYS on the record.

**After the interview**

* + After the interview, send the reporter an email thanking him or her for their time and confirming the scheduled run date.
  + Once the story appears, send a personal email to the reporter thanking them for their coverage.
  + Share the story internally and with Khrysanne Kerr at [kerr@commongroundalliance.com](mailto:kerr@commongroundalliance.com).

***To inquire about local 811 media relations in your area by our national agency, MGH, please contact Chris McMurry at 410-902-5036 or*** [cmcmurry@mghus.com](mailto:cmcmurry@mghus.com)***.***