



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Khrysanne Kerr

330-792-9942

kerr@commongroundalliance.com

Survey finds that nearly half 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 landscaping and other projects can prevent damage to underground utility lines and keep communities safe

WASHINGTON (March 30, 2015) –The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines and the safety of people who dig near them, today announced results from a recent survey that found nearly half (45 percent) of American homeowners who plan to dig this year for projects like landscaping, installing a fence or mailbox, or building a deck, pond or patio, will put themselves and their communities at risk by not calling 811 a few days beforehand to learn the approximate location of underground utilities. Extrapolated to the full population of U.S. homeowners, approximately 38.6 million people will dig this year without first having underground utility lines marked.

The national public opinion survey of homeowners, conducted Feb. 25-March 1, 2015, also found that 79 percent of those who plan to dig believe that something negative – such as a service interruption, bodily harm or financial ramifications – could occur if they were to dig without knowing the location of underground utilities.

An underground utility line is damaged once every six minutes nationwide because someone decided to dig without first calling 811, according to data collected by CGA. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in damage to gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines, which can lead to service disruptions, serious injuries and costly repairs.

There are more than 20 million miles of underground utilities in the United States, according to 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.

"According to the survey results, the majority of American homeowners believe something negative could happen if they don't call 811 to have underground utility lines marked, and yet nearly half do not plan to make the crucial call to 811 prior to starting their projects," said CGA President Bob Kipp. "Making a free call to 811 reduces the likelihood of causing an incident – such as service outages or bodily harm in worst-case scenarios – to just 1 percent. We want this message to be top-of-mind as do-it-yourselfers begin planning their gardening or home improvement projects this spring."

CGA's 1,700 members, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and most governors have proclaimed April as National Safe Digging Month as a way 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 with your local one call center that all lines have been marked.
- Learn what the various colors of paint and flags represent at www.call811.com/faqs.
- 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.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of 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 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 www.commongroundalliance.com.

About the study

SSRS conducted a national omnibus phone study between Feb. 25 and March 1, 2015, on behalf of CGA. A total of 646 American homeowners ages 18+ were asked for their opinions on home and property improvement project topics. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3.86%.

#