**Working with Your Governor’s Office to Promote Safe Digging and 811**

**Background**

Credibility is often earned through the company you keep, and when it comes to awareness campaigns, strong endorsements are key.

Many stakeholders have sought out and earned safe digging day, week or month proclamations from their governors for many years, even pre-dating the first National Safe Digging Month in 2008. Being able to say the governor cares about safe digging and 811 is an important message point to include in news releases, advertising, social media and on websites.

**Outreach**

On the following pages, CGA offers stakeholders a full suite of tools to obtain various levels of support from governors. Tools that have been available for several years and continue to be made available are:

* Tips to earn a Safe Digging Month proclamation.
* Letter that requests a proclamation.
* News release template announcing a proclamation.
* Internal announcement template announcing a proclamation.
* Public service announcement scripts that can be read by a governor.
* Follow up letter, after the proclamation is secured, requesting an on-site event at a governor’s mansion or state house.
* Media advisory template for this event.

CGA strongly recommends that a state agency, such as one that has jurisdiction over pipeline safety, draft and deliver a request asking for a higher level of governor’s office partnership.

**Tips for Obtaining Governor’s Proclamation**

As we prepare for National Safe Digging Month in April, CGA asks that stakeholders reach out to their respective governors to develop partnerships that help promote safe digging during April and throughout the year, by adding visibility and credibility to the safe digging message. The following is a document outlining some ways to approach a governor’s office for support, as well as how to leverage his/her support once it’s received.

**How to Get Started**

Call the public information officer or director of communications at the governor’s office and ask what steps should be taken to obtain a proclamation from the governor recognizing April as National Safe Digging Month. It is imperative that stakeholders contact the correct person at the governor’s office to ensure that their request is properly considered. Contact information for these positions can be found on the governor’s website under “contacts” or “contact us.”

**Submitting the Proclamation Request**

Use the template form letter provided by CGA as guidance when requesting a proclamation. Read through the letter and insert local information where indicated. Make sure to proofread the letter prior to submitting it for consideration. It is recommended that you email the request to the appropriate contact.

**Using Relationships**

If a stakeholder, such as an office of pipeline safety or similar state agency, has a relationship or contact with a state government official, leverage that relationship to request a proclamation from the governor. Requests for governor support are more likely to be approved if presented by another government contact.

**Leveraging the Proclamation**

Once a commitment has been secured from the governor’s office to support National Safe Digging Month, the stakeholder must negotiate what level of involvement the governor’s office is going to have in promoting this initiative. It is important that stakeholders get as much exposure as possible out of this relationship with the governor’s office.

CGA recommends requesting the following from the governor’s office to showcase its support of National Safe Digging Month:

* Formal government proclamation of support recognizing April as National Safe Digging Month.
* Formal presentation of the document by the governor or someone on his/her staff at a National Safe Digging Month event in your state.
* Use the templated PSA script provided by CGA to record a broadcast message from the governor or by his/her administration, reminding listeners about the importance of calling before digging and recognizing April as National Safe Digging Month.
* Use the templated press release provided by CGA to draft a joint press release with the governor’s office detailing why the governor decided to recognize April as National Safe Digging Month. Stakeholder and governor’s office will distribute the release to their respective media contacts. Include within press release:
	+ State digging trends, if available.
	+ Contact information for your local one call center.
	+ Quote from the governor.

Please note, stakeholders are encouraged to immediately begin thinking of how to leverage governor support, should it occur, in advertising scheduled for April 2020.

**After Securing Proclamation**

Once a proclamation has been secured, please notify Khrysanne Kerr at kerr@commongroundalliance.com. At that time, CGA and MGH can be available to offer consultation on leveraging the proclamation.

**TEMPLATE LETTER SEEKING PROCLAMATION**

DATE

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF [STATE NAME]

ATTN: CONTACT PERSON’S NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

Dear NAME:

As you may know, [stakeholder organization name] has partnered with the Common Ground Alliance for a successful initiative called National Safe Digging Month each April for the past 12 years to coincide with the onset of peak digging season. The initiative was designed to elevate the awareness of, and participation in, the prevention of digging-related damage to underground utilities.

On behalf of [stakeholder], underground facility owners, as well as [state] professional excavators, I respectfully ask Governor [name] to consider publicly proclaiming [state name] Safe Digging Month this April 2020 by recognizing the importance of calling 811 before digging.

During [state name] Safe Digging Month, and throughout the year, we respectfully ask that Governor [insert governor’s last name] remind [state] residents to contact [local one call center name] by dialing 811 [notification period] before starting any digging projects to prevent damage to the underground facilities and the risk of injuries and service disruptions that can occur.

The following are opportunities for Governor [insert governor’s last name] to show [his/her] support of [state name] Safe Digging Month:

* Issue an official proclamation of [state name] Safe Digging Month from the Office of the Governor.
* Deliver a brief speech about the importance of damage prevention at a [state name] Safe Digging Month event.
* Record a public service announcement that will air on [state] radio stations during [state name] Safe Digging Month.

We thank you in advance for your support of this initiative. If you have questions or would like more information on National Safe Digging Month, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) or contact me directly.

Regards,

NAME

INSERT TITLE

INSERT EMAIL

INSERT PHONE #

**NEWS RELEASE ANNOUNCING PROCLAMATION**

#### [Insert Company Logo]

**Media Contact:**

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

Gov. [Last Name] Proclaims april as [state name] safe digging month

*[Insert stakeholder] reminds local residents to call 811 before all digging projects*

**[CITY, STATE ABBREVIATION]** (March [date], 2020) — Today [state name] Gov. [Insert governor’s full name] issued a proclamation announcing April as [state name] Safe Digging Month. The proclamation reminds [Insert state] homeowners to call 811 before starting any outdoor digging projects.

April marks the start of spring digging season, so [Insert stakeholder] and Gov. [Insert governor name] are encouraging homeowners to call 811 before they dig to prevent injuries, property damage and inconvenient outages.

“Insert approved quote from the governor’s office about the importance of calling before you dig,” said Gov. [Insert governor’s last name].

When calling 811, homeowners are connected to [Insert local one call center], which notifies the appropriate utility companies of the 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. Once lines have been accurately marked, digging can begin around marked lines.

“We join the governor in strongly encouraging individuals and companies to call 811 before they begin digging,” said XXX, XXX [Insert stakeholder representative’s name and title]. “By having underground lines marked, homeowners are making an important decision that can keep help them and their communities safe and connected.”

Striking a single line can cause injury, repair costs, fines and inconvenient outages. Every digging project, no matter how large or small, necessitates a call to 811. Installing a mailbox, putting in a fence, building a deck and laying a patio are all examples of digging projects that need a call to 811 before starting.

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

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**internal news article announcing governor’s proclamation**

Gov. [Name] proclaims April safe digging month

April marks the start of spring digging season, so [Insert stakeholder] and Gov. [Insert governor’s name] are encouraging [Insert state] residents to call 811 before digging to prevent injuries, property damage and inconvenient outages.

Gov. [Insert governor’s last name] recently signed a proclamation observing April 2020 as Safe Digging Month in [Insert state]. This month is dedicated to increasing awareness of safe digging practices across [Insert state] and reminding homeowners to call 811 before starting any outdoor digging projects.

Call [Insert local one call center] at 811 at least [Insert state notification period] prior to a scheduled project to allow a professional locator to visit the property and mark the approximate location of the underground utility lines. Remember to dig around the marks, not on them, and also remember that time, erosion or root structure growth can shift the locations of utility lines.

Striking a utility line while digging can lead to injury, penalties, repair costs, and inconvenient outages, so consider this is a friendly reminder to call 811 before you dig in April and every other month of the year.

**Creating a Public Service Announcement with Your Governor**

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are commonly used to raise awareness about a specific issue on television and/or radio. The Common Ground Alliance recommends asking your governor to record a PSA that will air on statewide radio stations during National Safe Digging Month in April. The content of this PSA should remind listeners to call 811 before all digging projects.

Consider including the newly created PSA as part of your regular paid advertising. This will enhance your ability to reach your target demographic on a regular basis.

Below is copy to share with your governor’s office to encourage their involvement in the awareness campaign:

***:15 Copy***

Hi, this is Governor [Name]. April is [state name] Safe Digging Month, which serves as a reminder to call [one call center] at 811 at least [Insert state dig law] before you dig to have the approximate location of the underground utilities marked. Know what’s below. Call 811.

***:30 Copy***

Hi, this is Governor [Name]. I have proclaimed April as [state name] Safe Digging Month to remind all residents to call 811 before they dig, for all projects, big and small.

Before you break ground, call [one call center] at 811 to have your site marked for underground utility lines. It will help protect you and your communities from unintentional consequences caused by digging into an electric, gas or water line. For digging projects big or small; ALWAYS make the 811 call.

Call 811 at least [Insert state dig law] prior to digging, and please, dig with care. Don’t make a judgment call. Make a phone call to 811 to know what’s below.

**TEMPLATE LETTER SEEKING EVENT WITH GOVERNOR**

\*\*INCLUDE COMPANY LOGO OR LETTERHEAD\*\*

DATE

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF [STATE NAME]

ATTN: CONTACT PERSON’S NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

Dear NAME:

On behalf of all underground utility damage prevention stakeholders, I would like to thank Gov. [last name] for proclaiming April as [state name] Safe Digging Month. [His/Her] support goes a long way in helping us educate all [state name] residents about the importance of calling 811 before every dig.

I am writing today to respectfully ask that Gov. [last name] consider partnering with [state name] damage prevention stakeholders for an event held at [Governor’s Mansion or State House] where we could join you in conducting a demonstration by marking the underground utilities on that property with flags or paint, just as it’s done throughout the state for more than [insert number] locates per year.

We hope this symbolic location will attract media coverage and show [state] residents how many utilities are buried below ground on just one high-profile property.

It would also serve as an excellent opportunity to educate [state] residents on what the various colors signify and how a phone call to 811 a few days before digging is the best way to protect themselves and their communities from potential dangers and inconvenient outages.

Thank you again for your support, and we hope we are able to work together to further promote safe digging.

Regards,

NAME

INSERT TITLE

INSERT EMAIL

INSERT PHONE #

**GOVERNOR EVENT MEDIA ADVISORY**

#### [Insert Company Logo]

**Media Contact:**

[NAME]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

#### [Stakeholder Name] and Gov. [Name] to Demonstrate Importance of Calling 811 before Digging at [Location] Event

**WHAT:** Representatives from [stakeholder name] will join [state name] Gov. [name] for an event at [location] where underground utilities on the property will be marked with flags or paint in honor of [state name] Safe Digging Month, which Gov. [name] has proclaimed for the [Xth] consecutive year.

**WHY:** The best way to avoid damaging your utilities and risking injury or loss of service is to call 811 a few days before digging to learn the approximate location of buried lines in your area.

 This event is designed to raise awareness among [state] residents of the importance of calling 811 to avoid damage to underground utilities, which can potentially cause injuries and inconvenient service outages.

**WHEN:** [Insert Event Date]

[Insert Event Starting Time] – [Insert Event Ending Time, if applicable]

**WHERE:** [Insert Street Address]

[Insert City], [Insert State] [Insert Zip Code]

For more information visit [www.Call811.com](http://www.Call811.com) or [Stakeholder URL].

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**SAMPLE PROCLAMATION**

