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PSC reminds Montanans to call 811 before digging

Spring may be in the air, but before you turn a spade for projects that require digging, the Montana Public Service Commission encourages you to call 811.

The national service is offered for free to help businesses and residents locate and mark utility lines with paint or flags.

When calling 811, a telephone operator asks for the location of a project and dispatches a utility representative to the site within two to three days to mark underground lines.

PSC Chairman Travis Kavulla, R-Great Falls, said, "Calling 811 is not only required, but an easy way to prevent injury, service disruptions, and repairs that cost everyone money."

Callers are asked to contact 811 at least two business days before digging—including for smaller projects such as landscaping, planting trees and shrubs and placing mailboxes.

The depth of utilities varies, and multiple lines may exist in an area. Some utility lines are just a few inches below the surface.

The Federal Communications Commission in 2005 designated 811 as the national number for businesses and homeowners to call before digging.

April is recognized as "National Safe Digging Month" to raise awareness of safe digging across the nation, where an often complex network of pipes, wires and cables are buried underground.

For more information, visit www.call811.com.