

**From:** Murdock, Amanda (UTC)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2009 9:27 AM  
**Subject:** NEWS RELEASE: Gov. Gregoire urges residents to 'Call Before You Dig'  
**Attachments:** Proclamation - Damage Prevention Month.pdf



STATE OF WASHINGTON

**UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 29, 2009

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**Don't Dig into Trouble**

***Gov. Gregoire urges residents to 'Call Before You Dig'***

**OLYMPIA, Wash.** – Gov. Gregoire has signed a proclamation declaring May Washington Utility Damage Prevention Month. As people plan various garden and home-improvement projects this spring, state regulators want to remind residents to always call 811 before digging. Whether it's planting a tree, installing a mailbox or building a fence, homeowners and contractors need to know where buried utility lines are located.

The governor's proclamation encourages residents to call the 811 utility-locating service two business days before they dig. The 811 hotline is a free service to obtain important information on what utilities exist beneath the excavation area. Buried electrical lines or natural gas pipes can be dangerously close to the surface. Accidental contact with a shovel or backhoe could be risky, and even fatal.

"If you don't call 811 two days before digging and damage an underground utility you could face triple the cost of repairs and losses," said Jeff Goltz, chairman of the state Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC), which regulates privately-owned utility companies in Washington state. "This past February a contractor digging on Mercer Island failed to call for a utility locate. He dug into the underground utilities, damaging the lines and leading to the evacuation of two residences. Incidents such as these are not only dangerous for the individual, but also to surrounding neighborhoods and residents."

In 2007, nearly 2,800 damage incident were reported due to individuals digging up gas pipelines in Washington. More than 110 of these incidents resulted in significant gas leaks. These dangerous accidents could have been prevented with one simple call to the 811 Utilities Underground Locating Center.

Washington law requires individuals to call 811 at least two days before the start of any project that includes digging twelve inches or more into the ground. After the request is made, a utility representative will physically identify the location of underground utilities with above ground, color-coded markings at no charge. Once the locate is complete, it is recommended to dig carefully around the

marked areas with a hand tool.

By having the underground utilities marked, people who dig can reduce the risk of striking a line causing outages, damages and fatalities.

If you experience trouble with a utility locate – if the locate is late, incomplete or inaccurate - please call the UTC Consumer Help Line at 1-888-333-WUTC (9882).

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**Editor's note:** Underground utility locators are available to conduct on-camera locates to demonstrate the importance of the locating process for homeowners. Call Amanda Murdock at (360) 664-1110 to schedule.

# The State of Washington



## Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, May marks the start of spring digging season for homeowners, landscapers, and construction companies; and

**WHEREAS**, failure to locate underground utilities before digging results in residents unintentionally hitting underground lines or pipes more than 200,000 times annually, leading to penalties, repair costs, inconvenient outages, injury or death; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington's free 811 one-call service notifies the appropriate utility companies of the intent to dig; and

**WHEREAS**, the one-call center directs professional locators to the requested digging site to mark approximate locations of underground lines, safely alerting the dig crew of the danger below; and

**WHEREAS**, all residents are required by law to call 811 at least two business days before they dig to prevent inconvenient outages, repair costs, property damage, injuries or death;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Christine O. Gregoire, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim May 2009 as

### ***Damage Prevention Month***

in Washington State, and I urge government agencies, industry leaders and consumer advocates to educate residents about state and federal laws before they dig to ensure the safety of our residents, homes, and businesses.

Signed this 15<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2009

  
Governor Christine O. Gregoire

