



Media Release

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SAFE DIGGING MONTH REMINDS OREGONIANS TO CONTACT 811 BEFORE DIGGING

SALEM, Ore. – In recognition of *National Safe Digging Month*, the Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA), and Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) remind Oregonians to contact 811 before starting projects that require digging.

Whether a professional contractor or do-it-yourselfer, all play an important role in preventing damage to underground utilities. No matter how big or small a project, contact Oregon 811 to avoid life-threatening injuries and prevent costly damage to necessary utility services. There are three easy steps to safe digging in Oregon:

1. Submit a locate request at least two business days before starting a digging project at Oregon811.com or by calling 811.
2. Wait for utilities to mark the underground lines.
3. Dig carefully, paying close attention to the marks.

Once a locate request is made, the OUNC, which operates the free 811 one-call center, notifies the utility companies that serve the area of the planned project. Utility personnel then visit the project site to mark the approximate location of the underground lines, pipes, and cables in the planned digging area at no cost to the homeowner or employer.

Meanwhile, employers must follow Oregon OSHA requirements to protect workers against the potential hazards of underground utilities. Those requirements include:

1. Notifying OUNC of the proposed area of excavations at least two working days before starting an excavation.
2. Estimating the location of utilities before opening or extending an excavation.
3. Determining by safe and acceptable means, the exact location of the estimated utility installations when excavation activities approach them.
4. While excavations are open, underground installations must be protected, supported, or removed as necessary to safeguard employees.

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Statistics show that a majority of line strikes occur during the warmer months when excavation and construction work is being done. In 2021 an estimated 192,745 unique instances of damage occurred nationwide, 17 percent of which were due to insufficient notice to the 811 service.

To reduce the number of line strikes in Oregon, there are strong local partnerships between OUNC, Oregon OSHA, and the PUC to enhance the communication link and improve safety efforts.

Visit [Oregon811.com](https://oregon811.com) or call 811 to submit a locate request or to learn more about safe digging practices.

Oregon OSHA offers employers free [consultations](#) – no fault, no citations, no penalties – to improve workplace health and safety programs and practices. It also offers free [technical help](#) with understanding and applying workplace safety rules.

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In 1995, the Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC) to establish a statewide notification system to protect contractors, the general public and buried utilities from damages or injuries caused by excavation activities (ORS 757.547). The free service ensures that operators of underground facilities are notified of proposed excavation so the utilities can be located and marked in advance. For more information about the OUNC or the statewide notification system, go to [Oregon811.com](https://oregon811.com).

Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules, and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. For more information, go to osha.oregon.gov.

The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulates customer rates and services of the state's investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities, including Portland General Electric, Idaho Power, Pacific Power, Avista, Cascade Natural, and NW Natural. The PUC also regulates landline telephone providers and select water companies. The PUC's mission is to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and fairly priced utility services that advance state policy and promote the public interest. We use an inclusive process to evaluate differing viewpoints and visions of the public interest and arrive at balanced, well-reasoned, independent decisions supported by fact and law. For more information about the PUC, visit oregon.gov/puc.