



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Government of Saskatchewan declares April *Safe Digging Month* with the reminder to Click Before You Dig

With the construction season fast approaching, the Government of Saskatchewan, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA) and Sask 1st Call, is declaring April *Safe Digging Month*.

The purpose of this declaration is to remind the public that clicking or calling for a free line locate and digging safely around underground infrastructure are crucial steps on the path to safety.

“Although April is officially Safe Digging Month in the province, we want contractors and homeowners to make every day safe on site throughout the construction season,” said Honourable Joe Hargrave, Minister of Crown Investments. “It’s critical to build time into your project to have a line locate completed and eliminate the potential for a dangerous and costly interruption like hitting a buried natural gas, power or telecommunications line.”

Each year in Saskatchewan, several hundred contacts with buried utilities occur. An essential step in the safe digging process is ensuring all underground utility lines are located and marked through Sask 1st Call before excavation begins.

“Since introducing improvements to the Sask 1st Call website and mobile app, the results are really paying off as we see these features gaining in popularity within the digging community,” said Erin Rodger, Manager of Sask 1st Call. “More than half our line locate requests are now submitted either online at sask1stcall.com or through the mobile app. The 2017 numbers are showing an eight per cent increase in volume compared to 2016 so we are preparing for a busy dig season.”

Before beginning a project, be sure to:

- Click for a free line locate by downloading the Sask 1st Call mobile app, visiting sask1stcall.com or calling 1-866-828-4888;
- “White line” the project area (using wooden stakes, marking flags or paint) or virtually white line the area by using Google maps when requesting a line locate; and
- Follow safe digging practices when working near underground lines, such as daylighting the line when working within 1.5 metres of the locate markings.

Once a customer requests a line locate, Sask 1st Call notifies its member companies. These companies require a minimum of two full working days’ notice to locate and mark their underground lines, at no charge, allowing the digging project to safely proceed.

Following proper excavation practices can help the digging community avoid major consequences, including lengthy project delays, costly damage to lines and equipment, disruption of essential services, property damage, environmental concerns, along with serious personal injury and even death.

“We are encouraged when we see the trend in underground infrastructure damage continue to move in a positive direction, which is fewer incidents,” said Luis Wilson, President of the SCGA. “Poor or unsafe digging practices and a failure to contact Sask1stCall contributes to a majority of accidental line damage. Make your only line contact with Sask 1st Call and its free screening and notification service.”

To help promote *Safe Digging Month* and the importance of following safe excavation practices, the SCGA is holding a series of Contractor Safety Breakfasts throughout April in 28 locations across the province. Watch for a media advisory with information about the breakfast being held in your area.

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The **SCGA** is a member-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring worker and public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of services by promoting effective damage prevention practices in connection with underground infrastructure activities. For more information, please go to www.scga.ca.

Sask 1st Call is a non-profit underground facility location service for contractors and homeowners who are planning to dig or excavate. Subscriber companies require two full working days' notice to locate the underground facilities at the project site, allowing work to continue without impacting buried infrastructure, or disrupting service to customers. Sask. 1st Call has 70 members (including SaskEnergy/TransGas, SaskPower and SaskTel) and represents more than 400,000 kilometres of buried infrastructure across Saskatchewan. For more information, please go to www.sask1stcall.com