



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Safety Patrol Program introduced for new urban neighbourhoods in Saskatoon and Regina

Homeowners and contractors doing excavation work in new neighbourhoods in Saskatoon and Regina this construction season will encounter Safety Patrols designed to reduce damage to buried utility lines. Sask 1st Call, together with the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA), are introducing the Safety Patrols to address a rising trend where buried electric, natural gas and telecommunications lines are being damaged during landscaping, fence and deck installation and driveway paving – activities that typically follow new home construction.

The Safety Patrols will check that homeowners and contractors have contacted Sask 1st Call for line locates and that underground lines have been marked prior to the project getting underway.

“The finishing touches to a new home – like putting in a fence or landscaping – need to include a safe work plan that starts with contacting Sask 1st Call,” said Barb Tchozewski, Manager, Sask 1st Call. “Three of Sask 1st Call’s member companies – SaskPower, SaskEnergy and SaskTel – had more than 1,000 lines damaged in 2013, many from incidents where locates weren’t done or from people digging too close to marked lines.”

Tchozewski said the Safety Patrols will also provide information on safe digging practices. This includes not operating power equipment like a post-hole auger or a backhoe within a metre of line markers, until the buried lines have been carefully exposed by hand.

Once a request for line locates is made, Sask 1st Call will arrange, free of charge, for any of its member companies with buried infrastructure on that property to ensure their lines are marked. Two full working days’ notice is required, and line markers are only valid for 10 days before a request must be made to have lines re-marked.

“Damage prevention and safe digging is a shared responsibility between homeowners, contractors and underground facility owners,” said Daryl Posehn, Executive Director of the SCGA. “We support the Sask 1st Call Safety Patrol program as a proactive way of preventing worker injury, as well as costly damage to property and infrastructure. Damage to underground lines in Saskatchewan last year cost \$10 million in repairs and lost productivity.”

The Safety Patrols will be targeting the Saskatoon and Regina neighbourhoods where the Crown utilities have reported a higher percentage of facility damage, due to the amount of construction activity in these areas. In Saskatoon, this will include Rosewood, Stonebridge, Hampton Village, Evergreen, Willowgrove, and the cities of Warman and Martensville. For Regina, the patrols will be active in Harbour Landing, The Creeks, Greens on Gardiner, Maple Ridge, Lakeridge,

Skyview, Hawkstone, Edgewater, Kensington Greens and the communities of Pilot Butte, Balgonie, White City/Emerald Park and the city of Moose Jaw.

The Safety Patrol, travelling in marked Sask 1st Call and Know Before You Dig vehicles, will be used from May 1 until October 31, when the majority of construction occurs.

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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 “**Call Before You Dig**” 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 close to 60 members (including SaskEnergy/TransGas, SaskPower and SaskTel) and represents more than 400,000 kilometres of buried infrastructure across Saskatchewan.

There are three ways to contact Sask 1st Call to have underground lines located free of charge: call the toll free number 1-866-828-4888; complete the on-line form at www.sask1stcall.com; or fax your request to 1-866-455-5559 (forms on-line). Sask 1st Call operates from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For all emergency or priority line locates, call **1-866-828-4888**, and after-hours service is available for emergency requests.

In 2013, 131,721 line locate tickets were completed by Sask 1st Call for contractors and homeowners.

For more information, please go to www.sask1stcall.com