



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Government of Saskatchewan declares April 2016 *Safe Digging Month*; reminds homeowners and contractors to follow safe digging plan

With preparations underway for another busy construction season across the province, the Government of Saskatchewan, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA) and Sask 1st Call, has again declared April *Safe Digging Month* to remind the public of the importance of digging safely around underground infrastructure.

“Each year in Saskatchewan, too many incidents of line contacts with buried utilities occur. These incidents happen because a step in the safe digging process was missed: a free line locate may not have been requested; dig areas weren’t properly identified; safe digging practices were not followed when working near underground lines,” said Honourable Don McMorris, Minister of Crown Investments. “Taking the time to manage each step is vital to ensure the safety of all workers on site as damage prevention is a shared responsibility.”

An essential step in the safe digging process is ensuring all underground utility lines are located and marked by Sask 1st Call subscriber companies before excavation begins. With recent improvements to the Sask 1st Call website and last year’s launch of the new Sask 1st Call mobile app, requesting a line locate has never been easier for the digging community. To date, more than 300 contractors have used the mobile app; and total line locate requests continue to increase, with more than 140,000 requests in 2015.

Contractors and homeowners now have the ability to use Google Maps to request a line locate – on site – from their phone and virtually white line their work area. They can also look at their requests and see the subscriber companies that were notified for each dig site and request a relocate if the locate markings are faded.

“With the busy construction season just around the corner, we want to remind everyone to please take the time to Click, Call or Tap before they dig,” said Barb Tchozewski, Manager of Sask 1st Call. “This year has more exciting changes related to how people can request locates, which includes an update to Sask 1st Call’s web request process. Whether you are a homeowner building a new deck or a contractor excavating a basement, please remember to include contacting Sask 1st Call as part of your safe digging plan.”

Once a customer requests a line locate, Sask 1st Call notifies underground infrastructure owners of potential ground disturbance work occurring near their facilities. 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.

Failing to follow proper excavation practices can result in significant 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.

“Thanks in part to efforts from the SCGA and Sask 1st Call, safety initiatives from our Crown utilities, and increasing awareness from the digging community, I’m happy to say we’ve started to see a slow but noticeable trend in the right direction when it comes to underground infrastructure damage,” said Daryl Posehn, Executive Director of the SCGA. “However, unsafe digging practices continue to be the leading cause of accidental line damage. Establishing a safe digging plan, which includes Sask 1st Call’s subscriber companies locating underground facilities, is vital to ensuring contractors and homeowners work safely around buried infrastructure.”

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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For more information please contact:

Daryl Posehn
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance
Ph: (306) 536-2524
Email: dposehn@scga.ca

Barb Tchozewski
Manager
Sask 1st Call
Ph: (306) 777-9507
Email: btchozewski@saskenergy.com

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 56 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