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**April is ‘Safe Digging Month’
— Excavators, Contractors, and Homeowners: Call 811 Before Digging —**

ALBANY —The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today announced that it is participating in the nationwide effort to recognize April 2023, as “Safe Digging Month.” Highlighting the importance of safe digging helps to remind excavators and contractors that State law requires them to call one of the State's toll-free one-call centers before starting any digging, excavation, or demolition project. The Commission also encourages homeowners to contact the State’s toll-free one-call center. In recognition of this, Governor Kathy Hochul has proclaimed April 2023 as ‘Safe Digging Month’ in New York.

“The Department continues promoting safe digging for all New Yorkers, which includes calling 811 before you dig.” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “By participating in the National ‘Safe Digging Month,’ we remain committed to ensuring safe digging activities to the general public and professionals.”

The keys to preventing damage to underground facilities are the two “one-call notification systems” that serve as communication links between contractors/excavators and the operators of underground facilities (local utilities and municipalities). New York 811 is the one-call notification system serving New York City and Long Island and UDig NY serves the remainder of the State (Westchester County and North). When calling from inside the areas served, either can be reached by dialing 811. In addition, both one-call centers allow locate requests to be submitted at any time through web-based ticket entry or through use of their toll-free number. Use of the one-call centers is free.

The Commission, which oversees electric and telecommunication utilities, as well as nearly 100,000 miles of natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines transporting much needed energy across the State to consumers, prides itself on its zealous safety oversight. The Commission’s rigorous review of utilities’ natural gas and hazardous liquid infrastructure and operations exceeds federal requirements and includes prescribing aggressive safety performance metrics and conducting thousands of incident investigations. On a daily basis, the Commission’s team of highly trained employees closely monitors utility activity to ensure compliance.

Along with participating in the nationwide Safe Digging Month program, the Commission’s staff works diligently to enforce its pipeline safety regulations, which are among the most stringent in the nation, to ensure that utility companies adhere to the regulations regarding the safe operation of the utility’s natural gas and hazardous liquid pipeline systems. To continue to improve pipeline safety, the Commission routinely monitors the utilities’ damage prevention programs to make sure that they are

up to date, to identify improvement opportunities, and to ensure that the plans and procedures are in compliance with the Commission's pipeline safety requirements. Over the past 19 years, these efforts have led to the steady decrease in statewide damages to natural gas facilities per 1,000 notifications; from 6.81 in 2003, to 1.70 damages per 1,000 notifications in 2022, making New York State a national leader for this metric.

New York leads in its use of financial incentives and penalties related to pipeline safety. Excavators who damage underground facilities due to the failure to follow the regulations are not only subject to civil penalties, but also are liable for repair and loss of commodity costs. State law exempts excavators from liability for repair costs if the damage is caused by the utility's or municipality's failure to comply with the law, such as failure to participate in the one-call notification systems.

For more information about UDig NY, go to <https://udigny.org/> or call 315-437-7394. To place a mark-out request with UDig NY, call 1-800-962-7962. For more information about New York 811, visit the <https://newyork-811.com/> or call 631-778-8111. To place a mark-out request with New York 811, call 1-800-272-4480.