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## **IUB urges Iowans to always call 811, plan ahead during COVID-19 and Safe Digging Month**

*Encourages industry participants to be flexible scheduling utility locates*

(Des Moines) – Excavators and utility locators have additional precautions to be aware of this spring as the COVID-19 public health emergency continues to affect staffing and scheduling of underground utility locates required by Iowa’s One Call law.

April is annually recognized as National Safe Digging Month, and the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) joins with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and the Common Ground Alliance to remind everyone to exercise caution with any digging project by placing a call to 811 or requesting a utility location through [IowaOneCall.com](http://IowaOneCall.com). Calling 811 is not just a good idea – it’s the law.

A call to 811 or submitting information online notifies operators with underground utility facilities of the intent to dig. Utility companies typically respond within two business days (48 hours) by marking the underground utilities with color-coded paint and flags that indicate where utility lines are buried. Under Iowa law, locators can negotiate extensions to the 48 hour requirement. The Attorney General’s office enforces the One Call law and the IUB assists the AG by investigating One Call complaints.

The IUB also encourages industry excavators, contractors, and locators, to be flexible in scheduling. Iowa’s 811 call center remains fully operational to receive locate requests and communicate them to utility companies; however, requested response times may be increased as companies ask to prioritize critical work. Iowa’s [law regarding underground facilities](#), can assist operators and locators who need to request an adjustment in scheduling or response times due to staff availability. The law requires that any resident or professional excavator planning digging work request a utility locate and mark its facilities before digging, begins to prevent serious injuries, service disruptions, or costly repairs to underground utility lines. The IUB recommends following these steps before starting any digging project:

- Always call 811 at least 48 hours before digging anywhere. Plan ahead and be prepared for potential delays due to COVID-19.
- Consider relocating any project that is close to utility line markings.
- Confirm that a contractor has called 811. Don’t allow digging if utility lines aren’t marked.

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*The Iowa Utilities Board regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans.*

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