

# NEWS RELEASE

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## OREGONIANS URGED TO AVOID DIGGING INTO TROUBLE WITH NEW STATEWIDE PROCLAMATION

On average, it happens 3.85 times every single day in Oregon – homeowners and professional excavators damage underground utilities while digging on their property or jobsite. In some cases, the results can be catastrophic. Joining the national observance during the month of April, Governor Tina Kotek has signed a proclamation designating National Safe Digging Month in Oregon.

The statewide proclamation underscores the importance of requesting underground utility locates through Oregon’s free notification system, available by calling 811 or going to [Oregon811.com](http://Oregon811.com) at least two business days before digging. Requests can be made anytime and on any day for no cost.

“We say ‘safety is in your hands,’ because everyone has the ability to prevent service interruptions, costly repairs, environmental damage, injuries, and worse,” said Josh Thomas, Executive Director of the Oregon Utility Notification Center. “Contacting 811 first helps avoid having to contact 911 later.”

The timing of National Safe Digging Month unofficially marks the start of “dig season” – the most active months of the year for excavation projects. According to the Oregon Utility Notification Center, there were 342,061 requests in 2023, prompting 1,869,969 utility locates in Oregon. In the most recent damage report, there were 1,405 reported incidents, continuing a downward five-year trend.

Common Ground Alliance reports that more than half of U.S. homeowners plan to dig without requesting utility locates. This is mostly attributable to lack of awareness and shallow digging projects. The estimated annual cost of damages to underground utilities nationally is \$30 billion.

As an acknowledgement of the National Safe Digging Month observance, and in support of the 811 notification system, this proclamation is supported by the Oregon Utility Notification Center, Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division, and Oregon Public Utility Commission.

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*In 1995, the Oregon Legislature created the **Oregon Utility Notification Center (OUNC)** to establish a statewide notification system to reduce damages to underground facilities and to promote public safety related to excavation issues (ORS 757.547). The free service ensures that operators of underground facilities are notified of proposed excavation so the utilities can be located and marked in advance. For more information about the OUNC or the statewide notification system, go to [Oregon811.com](http://Oregon811.com).*

*The **Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC)** regulates customer rates and services of the state’s investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities. The PUC also regulates landline telephone providers and select water companies. The PUC’s mission is to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and fairly priced utility services that advance state policy and promote the public interest. For more information about the PUC, visit [oregon.gov/puc](http://oregon.gov/puc).*

***Oregon OSHA**, a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, enforces the state’s workplace safety and health rules, and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. For more information, go to [osha.oregon.gov](http://osha.oregon.gov).*