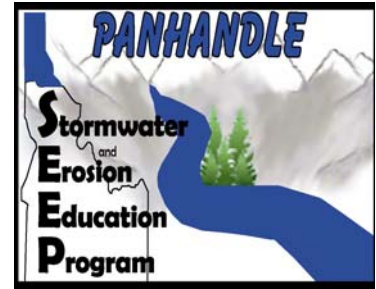


Exclusive to: NIBCA's *Dimensions*
December 30, 2008
Word count: 916
Submitted by Kate Wilson of the SEEP Committee



BMP of the Month (JANUARY): Call before you dig; what 811 is all about

Whether you are working professionally in the construction and/or development field or taking on some home improvement projects, the “811 Call Before You Dig” Campaign is something you should know about. Though the “Call Before You Dig” concept is not new, it was relatively recently streamlined with the 811 number so that a potential digger doesn’t need to bother with finding the right local number to call before initiating a project. The 811 campaign is a federally-mandated phone number; in Idaho code, it is illegal *not* to call before you dig (Idaho Code Chapter 22 Sections 55-2201).

Even if you are installing a mailbox, planting trees or hedges, reinforcing your deck, putting in a pool, or taking on a more serious project involving concrete, 811 is a good idea. Knowing where underground utility lines are buried before you dig will help protect you from injury and prevent damages to utilities, service disruptions and potential fines and repair costs. The depth of utility lines varies, and there may be multiple utility lines in one common area.

Not only could you damage an underground utility line when you do so much as plant a tree, but as it matures its roots may grow into your utility lines and disrupt your service, requiring you to remove what you've planted. Or, a tree planted too close to your home could damage your foundation.

The One Call process is the same; the One Call Center notifies your local affected utility companies, who will continue to mark your underground lines for free. With more than 62 local One Call numbers across the country, 811 eliminates the confusion of multiple "Call Before You Dig" numbers by providing one national number you can call to get your lines marked for free.

When you are preparing to call, you will need to provide the following information:

- Contact person and phone number (the homeowner or contractor);
- Physical address (subdivision lot/block and closest intersecting streets);
- Communicate where the proposed area of excavation is in relation to your address (front/back yard, north/south/west/east of road, railroad to the right-of-way, etc);
- Communicate what type of work will be done (foundation, driveway, fence, addition, landscaping, septic system, electric line, deck reinforcement, etc.);
- Pre-mark your dig area with white spray paint that will set out clearly the path of excavation planned.

You will be given a list of participating members of the One Call, the date and time that your project will be marked, as well as a ticket number to confirm your call. Within two business days, representatives will come to the work site and spray paint on their subsurface facilities on the ground. In Idaho, the following color code is used:

RED	YELLOW	ORANGE	BLUE	GREEN	PINK	PURPLE	WHITE
Electric	Gas-oil	Cable TV	Water systems	Sanitary Sewer System	Temporary survey markings	Reclaimed water, slurry, or irrigation lines	Proposed excavation

Once your local crews from member utility companies have been contacted by the one call center, they find out exactly where you are planning to dig and are on their way to mark where those hidden underground utility lines are under your lawn! A minimum of 2-10 working days prior to the start of your project is requested. Be sure to make the call far enough in advance so that it doesn't impact your timeline for the project; give it a week or so to be safe. The crews will work with you to ensure that you know exactly where to dig.

Once you know that all lines have been marked, it's time to dig! When digging, make sure to always dig around the marks, not on them. Some utility lines may be buried at a shallow depth, and an unintended shovel thrust can bring you right back to square one - facing potentially dangerous and/or costly consequences.

Always call 811 before starting any digging project!

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is the leading association created specifically to work with **all** industry stakeholders in an effort to prevent damage to underground utility infrastructure and ensure public safety and environmental protection. The CGA is the backbone of the 811 Campaign.

Along with the new 811-number, CGA and its 1,400 members and sponsors have launched the national "Call Before You Dig" campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of using 811, having utility lines marked before digging and protecting America's vast underground infrastructure of pipelines, conduits, wires and cables.

Several major national organizations have agreed to partner with the Common Ground Alliance to help make America a safer place. These organizations have all stepped up to the plate and will contribute significant in-kind services and resources throughout the 811 campaign: The Associated General Contractors of America, John Deere, the Travelers Companies, Inc., the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Cox Communications. The campaign has been very successful so far. CGA was recently honored with a Silver Anvil from the Public Relations Society of America (often considered the "Oscar" of the PR Industry) for the 811 National Awareness Campaign.

You can call 811 anytime to be connected with your local utility companies. Or, here in North Idaho, you can call (800) 626-4950 for Bonner/Boundary Counties, and (800) 428-4950 for Kootenai County to be directly connected to our local services. Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer planning a weekend project or a professional excavator contracted for a home improvement job, one phone call to 811 will get your underground utility lines marked for free. For more information on One Call, see <http://www.onecall.com>.