



Public Service Commission Chairman Lane's Column



April 5, 2021

Don't be an April Fool – Call Before you Dig!

April is full of surprises. Spring flowers pop up all around us. You may hear hungry little chirps coming from a nest near your porch. It's time to find and fix the wear and tear that winter has left behind on our homes and vehicles. Spring cleaning always reveals needed repairs we weren't expecting.

Of course, the month kicks off with surprises on April Fools' Day. Someone put sugar in the salt shaker or a plastic spider in the egg carton. It's all good fun until someone gets hurt. There is one April bombshell that is no fun at all; in fact, it's downright dangerous. And that is the surprise you will get if you accidentally hit a buried utility line while digging.

The Public Service Commission wants to remind you that April is Safe Digging Month. As the warmer days inspire us to dig post holes, plant trees or any other chore that requires digging, always call WV811 before you get started. It's not just a good idea – it's the law. Be aware that if you damage a utility line you can be held responsible for the cost of repairs. In addition, civil penalties can be assessed by the West Virginia Damage Prevention Board for line strikes, and those fines can be as high as \$5,000.

It's easy to avoid the risk by making a free call to WV811. Simply dial 811 or visit www.wv811.com and make your arrangements online. If you are a contractor or someone who frequently works with excavation, you can download the new WV811 app from the website to make contact even more convenient.

You must contact WV811 far enough in advance to give the utility companies 48 hours to respond, not counting weekends or holidays. WV811 will forward your request to all utility companies that have underground facilities in your area. Utility representatives will then come out and mark the position of those lines so that you can dig safely.

A broken water or sewer main will cause serious inconvenience. A snapped cable may interrupt phone, TV, or internet service. But a punctured gas line can kill you, and that's a surprise that can't be fixed.

Don't be an April Fool! Stay safe by calling WV811 before you dig.