WHEREAS, April marks the start of the spring digging season for homeowners, landscapers and construction companies; and

WHEREAS, failure to locate underground utilities before digging may result in unintentionally hitting underground lines or pipes, leading to penalties, repair costs, inconvenient outages, injury or even death; and

WHEREAS, Washington’s free 811 one-call service notifies the appropriate utility companies of an intent to dig; and

WHEREAS, the one-call center dispatches professional locators to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines, safely alerting the dig crew of the danger below; and

WHEREAS, all residents and professional excavators are required by law to call 811 at least two business days before they dig;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim April 2019 as

Safe Digging Month

in Washington, and I encourage all people in our state to join me in this special observance.

Signed this 12th day of March, 2019

Governor Jay Inslee
OLYMPIA, Wash. — To protect personal safety and underground utility infrastructure, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission reminds residents to follow the law and call 811 before they dig this spring.

Gov. Jay Inslee has issued a proclamation announcing April as Washington Safe Digging Month. The proclamation reminds the state’s residents to call 811 before digging into the ground to prevent injury, property damage, and inconvenient outages.

By calling 811 at least two business days before starting any digging projects, homeowners can obtain an underground utility locate to know what utility lines may lie below their property. Failure to “Call Before You Dig” may result in damage to underground utility lines or pipes, which happens more than 300,000 times in the U.S. annually.

As residents begin various garden, home improvement, and construction projects this spring, they must follow the law and call 811 before digging. Whether planting a tree, installing a mailbox, or building a fence, homeowners and contractors need to know where buried utility lines are located.

In 2018, 2,834 incidents involving damage to underground utilities were reported in Washington. Thirty-six percent of those incidents were caused by individuals digging without first getting an underground utility locate. These potentially dangerous accidents can be prevented by planning ahead and calling 811.

The Utility Notification Center receives calls to 811 and dispatches professional locators to physically mark utility lines beneath excavation areas. Once the locate is complete, remember to dig carefully around the marked areas with a hand tool. Buried electrical lines or natural gas pipes can be dangerously close to the surface. Accidental contact with a shovel or backhoe is risky and potentially fatal.

Last year, the notification center received 534,550 locate requests, an increase of more than 46,000 from 2017.

The UTC urges citizens who experience trouble with a utility locate—if the locate is late, incomplete, or inaccurate—to please call the UTC Consumer Help Line at 1-888-333-WUTC (9882).

###

Editor’s Note: A copy of Gov. Inslee’s proclamation and more information on safe digging can be found at www.utc.wa.gov/safediggingmonth (http://www.utc.wa.gov/safediggingmonth).