



## FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER BRENT BAILEY CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE



*The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.*

*Brent Bailey*

## SAFE DIGGING AND LINEMAN APPRECIATION

### Protecting Underground Utilities is Everybody's Responsibility

Much of the infrastructure that delivers utility service to our homes and businesses – water, sewer and natural gas piping, fiber optics cable and, increasingly, electric lines – is located below the ground surface. And as the saying goes, what is out of sight can be out of mind. That is why it is important to continually remind the public to call 811 at least two days before doing any digging, excavating, or other dirt work to have all utilities marked.



Photo credit: Anthony Phillips

To help drive this home, April is recognized as **National Safe Digging Month**. Far too often, utility services are interrupted not by unavoidable system disruptions or extreme weather events, but rather by people who are doing some kind of digging activity and they strike an underground utility. According to the most recent [Damage Information Reporting Tool \(DIRT\) Report](#), 509,000 excavation-related damages to underground facilities occurred in 2018 in the U.S., compared to the 2017 estimate of 439,000 damages. While this increase is concerning, it is important to note that year-over-year decreases had been the norm for more than a decade of reporting. The leading

root cause of damage was “Notification Not Made to 811 Call Center” at 26% of cases reported. Telecommunications were the most damaged facility at 48%, followed by natural gas at 28%.

Not only does hitting an underground utility likely cause a service disruption, striking an underground utility can also put people and communities in harm's way. Our in-state call-before-you-dig notification system, [Mississippi 811](#), is free and helps protect hundreds of thousands of miles of underground utility lines that are necessary for everyday life. In fact, Mississippi 811 took 400,458 calls/requests for lines to be located in 2019. From those calls/requests, Mississippi 811 sent 2,006,371 messages (requests for utility lines to be located) to their nearly 1,100 members. So if you must conduct digging or excavation, please utilize the free service offered by Mississippi 811. However, if you can delay a digging project at home, please consider doing so. Utility locator staffs are stretched thin due to the COVID-19 Orders and first responders really need to focus on COVID-19 related matters rather than responding to accidents caused by inattentive excavation.





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## Show Your Support for Utility Linemen

We recognize and express our gratitude to first responders like law enforcement personnel, fire fighters and emergency medical technicians, as we absolutely should. But after damaging winds, ice storms or even flash floods, utility linemen are often soon on the scene to assess damage, determine equipment and materials needed and then get to work restoring power as quickly and safely as possible, many times working 16-hour days until



Photo credits: Twin County Electric Power Association

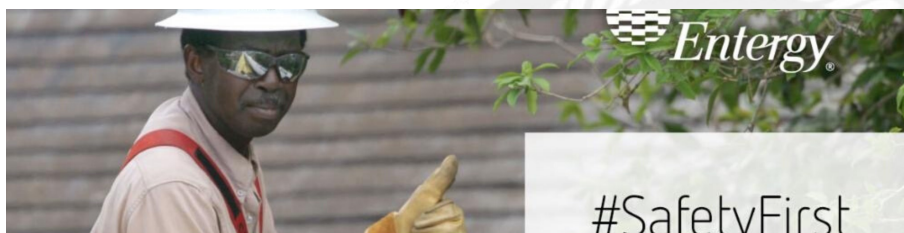


Photo credits: Entergy Mississippi

April 18 is **National Lineman Appreciation Day**. In the days leading up to April 18, our office had planned to go out into the field to showcase linemen at work in the Central District. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic shelter-in-place order and the need for social distancing measures, our office will just have to wait until next year to engage linemen in the field. So instead, please enjoy these photos submitted by our utility partners.



Photo credits: Central Electric Power Association



the job is finished. The Easter Tornadoes of 2020 is no exception. Utility crews were staged around the state in preparation of what turned out to be a series of damaging and deadly storms. For some parts of the state, it could take days to reestablish electric service.

*Did you know? There are approximately **115,000** linemen managing **9 million miles** of wire in the U.S.*



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But you don't have to wait until next year to express your appreciation for the dedicated, specialized work that utility linemen perform to keep the lights on. Between now and April 18, use social media and other means to show your gratitude for those folks in the bucket trucks, auger trucks and other heavy-duty trucks. If you are working from home, make a post or video expressing your thanks by using

Photo credits: Yazoo Valley Electric Power Association

**#NationalLinemanAppreciationDay** and **#thankalineman**. Or if you are on the roadways for essential purposes, toot your horn, give a thumbs-up or offer a simple wave.

In which ever manner you choose to express appreciation for utility linemen, please do not approach them and avoid entering a utility work zone. Work zones present any number of dangers to the public, and distracting linemen can cause accidents to happen. Furthermore, practicing extreme social distancing keeps all utility workers and the public safe, healthy and COVID-19 free.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **25** complaints in the Central District.

Telecommunications	<b>10</b>
Electric Companies	<b>12</b>
Natural Gas	<b>3</b>

Last week, the Central District received a total of **211** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins.

The [Federal Trade Communications](#) recently reminded consumers who are home, practicing social distancing during the Covid-19 situation, to remain vigilant of phone scammers attempting to take advantage of people as they pretend to be from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and try to collect social security numbers or money. The SSA will never call to threaten your benefits and your social security number is not about to be suspended. These are the two most common statements reported to our office by phone or on complaints that are filed. More tips to protect yourself against this scam and more information on the latest Corona virus related scams seen by the FTC can be found here: [https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/04/avoiding-ssa-scams-during-covid-19?utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/04/avoiding-ssa-scams-during-covid-19?utm_source=govdelivery).

**We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.**