



## NEWS RELEASE

---

COMMISSIONER BRENT BAILEY  
MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
CENTRAL DISTRICT

**For Immediate Release:**  
*April 1, 2021*

**Contact: Rachael Ring**  
**Public Affairs Director**  
**(601) 540-6611**  
**rachael.ring@psc.ms.gov**

### ***Call Before You Dig: April is National Safe Digging Month*** ***Commissioner Brent Bailey commends Mississippians for calling 811*** ***and avoiding damage to underground utilities***

JACKSON, MS— Public Service Commissioner Brent Bailey commends Mississippians for calling 811 before performing digging activity in 2020. Mississippi 811 reported a total of 444,416 calls received in 2020 resulting in almost 2.2 million utility locates, compared to 400,426 calls received in 2019 and 2 million utility locates.

Each April, we recognize National Safe Digging Month, an initiative that urges excavators and homeowners to call 811 before beginning a digging project to avoid any damages, injuries or fatalities that could result from striking a utility line.

Excavation damage is the leading cause of natural gas distribution pipeline incidents, and a leading cause of other pipeline incidents, nationwide. A critical step in preventing excavation damage is for the excavator to notify pipeline operators of intent to excavate at a specific location. This is normally done by the excavator calling a one-call center, such as Mississippi 811. The 811 agent then issues a locate ticket to alert pipeline operators and other underground utility operators with facilities located near the planned excavation activity. The pipeline operators can then locate and mark the location of their pipelines and otherwise communicate with the excavator as necessary to prevent damage to the pipelines.

“In the last year, our agency’s Pipeline Safety Division reported the lowest number of natural gas pipeline damage occurrences per thousand locates, 3.83, in more than 10 years,” Commissioner Bailey said. “In addition, the call volume at Mississippi 811 is 11% higher. These numbers indicate that Mississippians, statewide, are taking the time to call 811 before starting their digging projects. However, we must continue to improve in our excavation and locating practices.”

Installing a mailbox, building a fence and planting a tree or garden are all examples of digging projects that should begin only after underground utility lines are marked by a professional locator. The depth of utility lines can vary for a number of reasons, such as erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surfaces. Utility lines need to be properly marked because even when digging only a few inches, the risk of striking an underground utility line still exists. Striking a single line can

cause injury or death, significant repair costs, fines and inconvenient outages, which is why every digging project, no matter how large or small, warrants a call to 811.

“Under the leadership of the MPSC Pipeline Safety Program, the number of natural gas distribution line damages from excavation activities in Mississippi remain low,” Commissioner Bailey said. “Congratulations to the MPSC Pipeline Safety Division and to Mississippi 811 for their joint work of increasing awareness of 811, improving safety and preventing damage to underground utilities and pipelines in the state.”

Call 8-1-1 before you plan to do any digging or excavation work on your property in Mississippi or visit <https://www.ms811.org/>. For any other consumer matters, please contact the Mississippi Public Service Commission Central District Office at 1-800-356-6430.

###