

August 11 is National 811 Day – Ameren Illinois Issues Reminder to Call J.U.L.I.E. at 811 Before Digging

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**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

COLLINSVILLE – When it comes to digging on your property, no matter how big or how small the project, J.U.L.I.E. is someone you should get to know. Ameren Illinois marks National 811 Day, August 11, by reminding property owners and contractors to dial J.U.L.I.E. at 8-1-1 before digging to have the property marked for underground utility lines.

“Anyone starting an outdoor project may not be aware that natural gas pipelines or electric lines are buried underground,” said Eric Kozak, vice president, Natural Gas Operations and Distribution for Ameren Illinois. “In fact, every six minutes, someone contacts an underground utility because they didn't call 8-1-1 before that first shovel broke the earth. A proactive call to 8-1-1 will help prevent loss of power or natural gas, costly repairs, or serious injury. The service is free and it's the law to call before digging.”

Dialing 8-1-1 automatically connects callers to the local J.U.L.I.E (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) organization which determines whether underground facilities are present in the dig location. The U.S. Infrastructure Company (USIC) is then dispatched to the property to identify and mark utility lines within two business days. Digging can only begin once the marking process is complete and the start time on the "dig ticket" is valid.

For Ameren Illinois customers, yellow paint marks and yellow flags in the yard indicate the presence of natural gas pipelines, while red paint marks and red flags identify the location of underground electric lines. Even after the facilities are marked, digging within the tolerance zone (18 inches on either side of a marked line) must be completed by hand.

In the event that an underground facility is struck while digging, there are two courses of action depending on whether natural gas is leaking:

- If the strike results in a rotten egg smell, blowing dirt or bubbling water, then natural gas is likely leaking. Immediately clear the area and call 911, then Ameren Illinois at 800-755-5000, and then 8-1-1.
- If there is no noticeable release of natural gas, stop digging immediately and call Ameren Illinois at 800-755-5000. Ameren Illinois must arrive on scene to make repairs to the damaged line before the project can continue.

"Too often, people overlook damaged natural gas lines and continue working or attempt to stop escaping natural gas or to fix the damage on their own," said David Smith, superintendent of Damage Prevention for Ameren Illinois. "Do not under any

circumstance ignore a damaged utility line and continue working. This can create a more dangerous situation.”

In addition to dialing 8-1-1, the free service can be initiated by visiting Illinois1call.com.