



Avoid Serious Injuries By Dialing 811 Before Digging Or Staking The Ground

by Brian Bretsch
April 22 2023 7:40 AM



ST. LOUIS – As warmer weather moves in and people begin tackling yard projects, Ameren is reminding customers of a crucial first step: dialing 811 before digging and staking on their property.

Marking utility lines is a free service – and it's the law. Follow these important steps to stay in compliance and avoid serious injury, loss of service and expensive repairs:

1. Call 811 at least two business days before starting a digging project. Requests can be made at no cost, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 811, the national call-before-you-dig phone number, automatically connects callers to either Missouri 811 or Illinois J.U.L.I.E (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) organization.
2. Wait two days until a professional locator comes out to mark natural gas, electric, water, sewer, telephone and cable lines. The approximate location of buried utilities will be marked with paint or flags so that you can avoid them. Each utility type corresponds to a specific color of paint or a flag, and all of them must be marked before you can dig.
3. Once the site has been clearly marked, proceed with caution. Try to avoid digging within 18 to 24 inches of each utility mark, if possible. It's important to use the appropriate tools to dig with care and follow safe digging practices.

"Some underground utility lines are closer to the surface than people realize," said **Pam Harrison**, director of gas operations for Ameren Missouri. "It's important to make the call to 811 and have them mark the lines on your property – no matter if you're putting in a fence or mailbox, adding a new flower bed or planting a small tree. It's free and easy."

Nationwide every six minutes, an underground utility is damaged because someone didn't call 811 before that first shovel or spike broke the earth. If you damage a natural gas line, immediately leave the area, go upwind and call your utility provider, 911 emergency and then 811. You can reach Ameren Missouri at 800.552.7583 or Ameren Illinois at 800.755.5000.

"Ameren has seen a spike in reported damage from stakes causing natural gas outages because customers may not realize that driving a stake into the ground is considered excavating according to the law," said **Eric Kozak**, vice president of natural gas operations and distribution for Ameren Illinois. "We are working to communicate and educate them about the importance of calling 811 before breaking the earth with a stake or shovel."

To learn more about safe digging, visit call811.com. For more information on natural gas safety, visit Ameren.com/Safety.

About Ameren Corporation

St. Louis-based Ameren Corporation powers the quality of life for 2.4 million electric customers and more than 900,000 natural gas customers in a 64,000-square-mile area through its Ameren Missouri and Ameren Illinois rate-regulated utility subsidiaries. Ameren Illinois provides electric transmission and distribution service and natural gas distribution service. Ameren Missouri provides electric generation, transmission and

distribution services, as well as natural gas distribution service. Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois operates a rate-regulated electric transmission business in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. For more information, visit Ameren.com, or follow us on Twitter at [@AmerenCorp](https://twitter.com/AmerenCorp), [Facebook.com/AmerenCorp](https://facebook.com/AmerenCorp), or LinkedIn.com/company/Ameren.