



**Call Before  
You Dig**

**NorthWestern**<sup>®</sup>  
Energy



## Nice Call!

Please take a moment to review this safety pamphlet. Put it in a handy place, such as the glove compartment of your vehicle or near your telephone. By following simple procedures, we can save lives and prevent accidents.



## Working safely

NorthWestern Energy wants you to always be safe when it comes to digging around underground utility lines near your construction project – whether they are electric, natural gas or propane. Calling before you dig can save lives and prevent losses. Unless you are certain of what's down below, don't dig.

Safe digging starts when you call 811. But that's not where it ends. In fact, it's only the first step in an ongoing process that requires everyone's cooperation and good judgment. We can't emphasize enough the importance of safe digging. Every day throughout our service territory and the United States, careless digging causes far-reaching consequences, from serious personal injury and environmental damage to costly delays.

By following some simple procedures, we can keep accidents and property damage to a minimum. Each of us must take this responsibility personally. This brochure has been specifically designed to help you understand much of what is necessary to assure safe digging from start to finish. However, it is simply a reference. For complete laws and regulations regarding excavation, call the number listed on the back of this brochure.

Please read the information carefully. If you have any questions at any time, please call us.

## It's the Law

According to the laws of the states in which NorthWestern operates, anyone who excavates, trenches, plows, drills, augers, blasts, strips topsoil or levels land is required to give notice at least two working days before any excavation work is started.

Excavators who damage underground facilities without first calling to request and obtain locates must pay the full cost of repairs. In the case of personal injury or loss of life, as the excavator, you may be subject to a civil suit. When electrical, natural gas and other service lines are ruptured or damaged, the responsible excavator is charged for the damages.

Always call at least two (2) working days before you dig. Call the national "Call Before You Dig" number 811. A utilities locating center answers your call and will alert underground utility companies of planned excavation projects, including electric, natural gas pipeline, water, telephone and cable operators.



**Know what's below.  
Tap, Click, or Call  
811 Before you dig.**

## Q: What is 811?

A: 811 is a new federally-mandated N-11 number designated by the FCC to consolidate all local "Call Before You Dig" numbers and help save lives by minimizing damages to underground utilities. One easy phone call to 811 quickly and easily begins the process of getting underground utility lines marked. Local One Call Center personnel will then notify affected utility companies, who will continue to mark underground lines for free.

## Q: Why should I call 811 before every dig?

A: Calling 811 will help save lives and protect infrastructure. Knowing where underground utility lines are buried before each digging project begins helps protect you from injury, expense and penalties. The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in the same area. Even simple digging projects can damage utility lines and can disrupt vital services to an entire neighborhood, harm diggers, and potentially result in expensive fines and repair costs. Marked lines show diggers the approximate location of underground lines and help prevent undesired consequences.

## Q: I'm just a homeowner, not a contractor — is 811 for me?

A: Calling 811 is for professional excavators and do-it-yourself homeowners. A recent national survey revealed that roughly half of Americans are "active diggers" who have done (or are planning to do) some type of digging project at home. Whether you are a professional excavator or an avid do-it-yourselfer, you need to call 811 before every dig every time.









# What you need to do

Here's a list of steps to be taken by excavators, contractors, heavy equipment operators or even homeowners for the safest dig.

1. Contact your state's hotline at least TWO (2) working days BEFORE you excavate. The call should only take a few minutes.
2. Be ready with all important information:
  - Municipality, county, city
  - Street address or nearest intersection of streets and roads, or township, range, section and quarter
  - Type of work
  - Extent of work
  - Caller's name and title
  - Date and time excavation is scheduled to begin
  - Contractor/contact person and address
  - Phone number and call back times
3. Then, wait for the site to be marked. Markings are made with paint, flags or stakes.



4. Note the color of all markings used and what type of facilities they indicate.

UNIFORM COLOR CODE FOR MARKING UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES	
	PROPOSED EXCAVATION
	TEMPORARY SURVEY MARKINGS
	ELECTRIC POWER LINES, CABLES, CONDUIT AND LIGHTING CABLES
	GAS, OIL, STEAM, PETROLEUM OR GASEOUS MATERIALS
	COMMUNICATION, ALARM OR SIGNAL LINES, CABLES OR CONDUIT
	POTABLE WATER
	RECLAIMED WATER, IRRIGATION AND SLURRY LINES
	SEWER AND DRAIN LINES

If the utility line locations indicate the presence of a natural gas pipeline in the area, you'll need to identify whether the pipeline is a distribution or transmission pipeline. Gas transmission pipelines require different excavating procedures than gas distribution pipelines.

## Transmission Pipeline

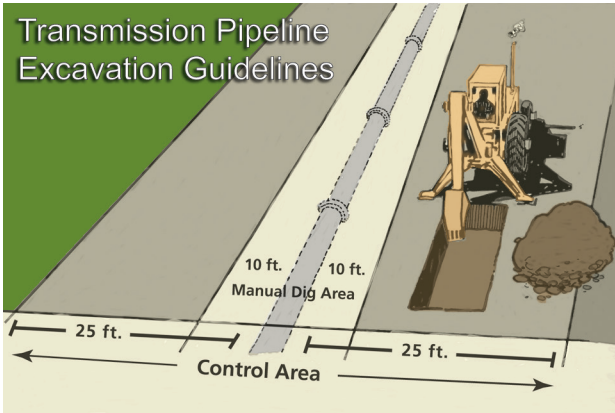
If the line is a natural gas TRANSMISSION pipeline, please follow these procedures:

- ✓ Obtain permission from any gas transmission owner before excavating in the owner's right-of-way area. The right-of-way, or pipeline easement, is also known as the "control area" and consists of an area 50 feet wide, 25 feet on either side of the pipeline.
- ✓ Request the transmission line owner's attendance at the excavation site during pipeline excavation work in advance of when the work is planned.

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- ✓ A representative of the pipeline owner must be present any time the 50-foot control area is disturbed or excavated.
- ✓ Construct proper vehicle and equipment crossings to allow for safe passage over the gas transmission right-of-way and pipeline. The transmission pipeline owner can assist you with the requirements for designing a safe crossing.
- ✓ Expose the buried transmission line by manual digging before using your heavy equipment within 10-feet on either side of the line. Twenty-five (25) feet on either side of a gas transmission line is considered a control area, as indicated in the illustration below.
- ✓ Do not use machinery within 10-feet of the transmission line.
- ✓ After your work is completed, you'll need to schedule an inspection. Call the gas transmission line owner at least 24 hours before you cover any exposed pipeline.



If you are excavating within this 50-foot control area, you are too close and need to have a company representative on site.

## Distribution Pipeline

If the line is a natural gas DISTRIBUTION pipeline, please follow these procedures:

- ✓ Any time you are crossing a gas distribution line, please allow sufficient time to contact the utility. The utility may choose to have a representative on site during the crossing.
- ✓ Always hand dig with a shovel when you are within 2-feet of any marked line.
- ✓ Do not use machinery within 2-feet of the distribution line, unless directly supervised by the owner of the line.
- ✓ If you disturb or damage the distribution line, notify the utility before burying the line. The utility will send a representative to the worksite to inspect and repair the line if necessary. Do not bury a disturbed line without an inspection by the utility.
- ✓ Unidentifiable gas “stubs” may be present. If encountered during excavation – cease work immediately and notify NorthWestern Energy.

5. Respect and protect all markings. Dig with care.



## What to do if a cable or pipeline is hit

Even when all precautions are taken, accidents can still happen. If you unexpectedly strike an underground cable or pipeline, take immediate steps to safeguard health and property.

### Electric Cable

If your equipment comes in contact with an electric cable:

1. Shut the machinery off and stay on the equipment until help arrives.
2. Keep people away. Touching energized equipment while standing on the ground could be deadly.
3. Call NorthWestern's 24-hour Electric Emergency toll-free phone number. In Montana, call (888) 467-2353; in South Dakota, call (800) 245-6977 and press 1.
4. Remain on the equipment unless you absolutely have to get off because of fire or some other emergency situation. If you have to get off the equipment, jump clear of it, keeping both feet together. Hop or shuffle to safety, keeping both feet together.

Simply walking away normally from energized equipment could cause electricity to pass through your body, causing serious harm. Your best action is to stay on the equipment until help arrives.

## Natural Gas Pipeline

If you contact a natural gas pipeline:

1. Turn your equipment off, if possible. Running equipment can be a source of ignition.
2. Leave the equipment in place – do not try to back it out.
3. Jump off the equipment.
4. Immediately clear the area.
5. If the contact results in leaking or blowing gas, contact 911 emergency services.
6. Call NorthWestern's 24-hour Gas Emergency toll-free phone number. In Montana, call (888) 467-2427; in South Dakota and Nebraska, call (800) 245-6977 and press 1.
7. Contact the One Call Center to report.
8. Keep people away until help arrives. If a line is hit or even scratched, please call us to report it. Even though the damage may not be obvious, a scratch or indentation may cause the pipeline to leak at a later time. Never bury a damaged pipeline.

### It's the law

If any underground facility is damaged, dislocated, or disturbed before or during excavation, the excavator shall immediately notify the One Call Center. An excavator shall not conceal or attempt to conceal damage, dislocation, or disturbance of an underground facility and shall not repair or attempt to repair the underground facility unless authorized by the operator of the underground facility.

# Know the smell of natural gas

Natural gas is a colorless, odorless, non-toxic substance. We add an odorant to the gas to warn you in the event of a natural gas leak. It smells bad for a good reason: to ensure your safety.

Because you may not be able to detect a natural gas leak only by smell, you also should be aware of other ways to spot a leak. If you see or hear any of the following indicators on or near our pipeline right-of-way, call the toll-free number listed on the nearest pipeline marker.



- An unusual blowing or hissing sound.
- Dirt or dust blowing from a hole.
- Bubbling ponds.
- Dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area near a pipeline right-of-way.
- Fire involving or in the vicinity of a pipeline.

If you smell the distinctive “skunk” or “rotten egg” odor of natural gas:

1. Leave the area immediately.
2. Do not use your phone, light a match or operate anything that might create a spark or flame.
3. Call NorthWestern Energy’s gas emergency number or your natural gas provider from a safe distance. Calls can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We will respond promptly and at no charge.
4. Do not try to extinguish a natural gas fire.
5. Do not attempt to turn any natural gas valves on or off.

Used properly, natural gas is a safe and reliable fuel.

# Educational resources

NorthWestern Energy has a strong commitment to energy safety and energy efficiency education. We provide electric and natural gas safety and energy conservation materials for teachers and students. Topics include energy efficiency, electric and natural gas safety, and the science of electricity and natural gas.

## *Public Safety Awareness*

- Our Public Safety Professionals work with the schools and civic organizations to educate the communities we serve about the services NorthWestern Energy provides and the value and impact those services have on your comfort and security.

## *Education Materials*

- NorthWestern Energy offers a wide variety of printed materials to educate the public about the potential dangers of working or playing near electric and natural gas lines. Find out what all we offer and request materials online at our website **NorthWesternEnergy.com**
- Also on our website we have links to a variety of interactive games that are fun for all ages.

## *Book a Louie/Sniffy Public Appearance*

- Want Louie the Lightning Bug or Sniffy the Sniffasaurus to visit your next event? They love to get out in the community and meet their fans! Send an email request with details on the event, date, time, location, contact information and any other relevant information to [Corp\\_Comm@northwestern.com](mailto:Corp_Comm@northwestern.com) and a utility representative will get back to you.

## We're at your service

Here's what Northwestern Energy service crews will do for you, if requested:

- Cooperate with your state's digging safety program to mark buried utility lines in your proposed excavation area.
- Provide you with excavation safety measures.
- Personally attend the exposing of buried pipelines, when given sufficient notice. In areas where NorthWestern owns gas transmission pipelines, NorthWestern personnel MUST be present for the excavation of these lines. Unseen damage to pipes can cause dangerous conditions after the excavation is backfilled. When possible, NorthWestern Energy will inspect the exposed pipeline prior to backfilling.
- Respond to any call for emergency assistance at the excavation site. Together, we can avoid underground utility line accidents that threaten lives and cause injury, costly lawsuits, fines and property loss settlements.

## We're willing to help

NorthWestern is willing to help make any excavation safe. By working together, we can prevent loss of life and property. For more information on excavation safety, or to have underground utilities located, call 811. It's a free call, and a free service of NorthWestern Energy.



# Contacts...

## MONTANA

Call Before You Dig 811  
Customer Contact Center: (888) 467-2669  
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F  
Emergency 24/7 Service

## NEBRASKA

Call Before You Dig 811  
Customer Contact Center: (800) 245-6977  
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F  
Emergency 24/7 Service

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Call Before You Dig 811  
Customer Contact Center: (800) 245-6977  
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F  
Emergency 24/7 Service

To request additional copies of this booklet or check the availability of digging safety presentations, call NorthWestern's Resource Center at (800) 440-2497.



*Before you dig,  
know what's  
below*

**Kathy B.**  
Engineer  
20 years of service



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