

April 6, 2010 – For Immediate Release

**For more information contact:**

Chair Greg Jergeson, 406.444.6166

Public Information Specialist Sarah Carlson, 406.444.6171

## **PSC Chair Urges Montanans to Call 811 before You Dig**

Planting a hedge? Adding to your deck? Pounding in a new mailbox? The Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) urges everyone to stay safe by calling 811 before beginning any digging project.

“Spring is here, and many Montanans are beginning projects that involve moving dirt,” said PSC Chair Greg Jergeson. “By calling 811 you can avoid serious injury by finding out exactly where underground utility lines are located in your project area.”

Calls to 811 are directed to a local call center and the variety of affected utilities. Utility staff will then come out to your project area, usually within 2-3 business days of your initial call, and mark any underground utility lines. The entire process is free to callers. Different colors of paint or stakes are used to identify what kind of utility line is buried below the ground. They include:

- Red – Electric
- Yellow – Gas/Petroleum Pipe Line
- Orange – Communications, Telephone/CATV
- Blue – Potable Water
- Purple – Reclaimed Water
- Green – Sewer/Drainage.

The depth of utility lines varies significantly and there may be multiple utility lines in one area. Also, some utility lines are only a few inches below the surface, making them easy to strike even during shallow digging projects, such as plantings. If you hit an underground utility line while digging, you can harm yourself or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and potentially be responsible for fines and repair costs.

April 2010 has again been designated “National Safe Digging Month,” dedicated to increasing awareness of safe digging practices across the country. It also celebrates the creation of the national call-before-you-dig number. In 2005, the Federal Communications Commission designated 811 as the national call-in number for homeowners and professional excavators to call before digging. Additional information on this nationwide program can be found at [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

Made up of 5 elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.

-- ### --