

Ameren Encourages Customers To Call 811 Before Breaking Ground

by Ameren Corporation Communications
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ST. LOUIS - Spring has officially sprung, and many homeowners are thinking about new landscaping projects to tackle before the heat and humidity set in. April marks National Safe Digging Month, and Ameren is reminding customers to practice caution and call 811 before starting a digging project.

Calling 811 is the law – it not only protects customers but the entire community. Hitting a buried line while digging can disrupt utility service, cost money to repair and even cause serious injury or death. Follow these three crucial steps to comply with the law and stay safe:

1. Call 811 or visit Missouri-811.org in Missouri or Illinois1call.com in Illinois at least three business days before starting a digging project. Requests can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
2. Wait 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 and flags so you do not unintentionally dig into an

underground utility line. Each utility type corresponds to a specific color of paint and flag (yellow for natural gas and red for electric), and all of them must be marked before you can dig.

3. Once the site has been clearly marked, proceed with caution. Avoid digging within the tolerance zone of each utility mark. The tolerance zone on each side of the utility mark is 24 inches in Missouri and 18 inches in Illinois. It is important to use the appropriate tools to dig with care and follow safe digging practices. If digging within the tolerance zone cannot be avoided, digging must be completed by hand.

In the event that you inadvertently strike an underground natural gas line or other facility, stop digging right away, clear the area and immediately call Ameren Missouri at 800.552.7583 or Ameren Illinois at 800.755.5000.

"According to the Common Ground Alliance, millions of U.S. homeowners will put themselves at risk by not contacting 811 before digging," said **Pam Harrison**, senior director of gas operations for Ameren Missouri. "Even if you think the depth of your project isn't that deep, many underground utility lines are closer to the surface than people realize."

Even DIY projects that might seem small require you to contact 811, including:

- Planting a garden
- Planting a tree
- Installing a mailbox
- Installing a yard stake for your dog
- Digging an in-ground sandbox
- Removing a driveway or concrete slab

"It is important to have utilities freshly marked every time you dig, even if you have had utilities marked for past projects," said **Eric Kozak**, vice president of natural gas operations and distribution for Ameren Illinois. "The lines may have shifted due to erosion and root growth since the last project. Calling 811 is free and easy, so keep your home and neighborhood safe by calling first."

Nationwide every six minutes, an underground utility is damaged because someone did not 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.

To learn more about safe digging, visit Missouri-811.org in Missouri or Illinois1call.com in Illinois.

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 develops, owns and operates rate-regulated regional electric transmission projects in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. For more information, visit Ameren.com, or follow us at [@AmerenCorp](https://www.facebook.com/AmerenCorp), [Facebook.com /AmerenCorp](https://www.facebook.com/AmerenCorp), or [LinkedIn.com/company/Ameren](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Ameren).