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## News

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Contact: Jeannie Layson  
Tel: 202-366-4831



### **PHMSA, Public Safety Officials & Washington Gas Host First Responder Training to Remind the Public to Call 811 BEFORE Digging** *Uses August 11 to promote national, toll-free number*

SPRINGFIELD, Va. –The Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the Washington Gas Company and the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department today held a pipeline safety demonstration to educate the public about the importance of calling 8-1-1 before digging.

“August 11<sup>th</sup> is the perfect time for everyone to remind their friends and neighbors of the importance of calling 811 before you dig,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Staying safe around pipelines is a responsibility we all share. Know what’s below before you dig by calling 811. It can save your life and protect your property.”

The live demonstration, held at Washington Gas’s Pipetown training facility in Springfield, Virginia, is part of a national effort to promote safe digging on August 11, or 8-1-1. The demonstration showed what happens when a pipeline is damaged by excavation and emergency responders arrive on the scene. A special hazmat team presented several techniques they employ to secure an area and protect themselves during the response. Workers from Washington Gas also demonstrated how field operators locate and mark underground lines after someone makes a call to 8-1-1. On average, about 2,400 emergency responders train at this facility each year.

“We know that most of these accidents can be prevented by calling 811 before digging,” said PHMSA Administrator Cynthia Quarterman. “It’s free, easy and helps keep you, your neighbors and your property safe.”

8-1-1 is a national, toll-free number that provides the public with information about the pipelines and power lines that may run under their property. The public should call 8-1-1 a few days before any digging, and someone will come out and mark the utility and power lines.

There are 2.6 million miles of pipeline in our nation. Major pipeline accidents are rare but of those that occur, one-third are caused by someone digging and hitting a pipeline by mistake, which can be fatal to those causing the accident and to those responding.

In May 2012, PHMSA released a fairy tale-themed [public service announcement](#) advising the public to “Avoid a Grimm Situation” by calling 811 before they dig.

In April 2011, Secretary LaHood issued a [Call to Action](#) on pipeline safety, asking pipeline operators to replace and rehabilitate aging pipelines. PHMSA closed a [record number of enforcement cases](#) in 2011 and is collecting more data about pipelines and stepping up efforts to educate the public about staying safe around pipelines. The new [Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011](#) gives PHMSA even more ways to hold pipeline operators accountable as well as the ability to issue civil penalties, double that of previous statutory amounts for operators that violate pipeline safety laws.

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*The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration develops and enforces regulations for the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> for more information.*