



**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR CYNTHIA QUARTERMAN
ADMINISTRATOR
PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL 8/11 DAY PIPELINE DAMAGE PREVENTION EXHIBITION
SPRINGFIELD, VA
-- FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2012 --**

Thank you and good morning. First, I'd like to thank Fire Chiefs Bowers, Bastin, and Ellerbe for joining me to send this important message. And as always, thank you for protecting our communities through your emergency response departments. I'm also sending special thanks to Doug Staebler of Washington Gas for graciously hosting this year's 8/11 day event!

My name is Cynthia Quarterman and I serve as the administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), an agency in the U.S. Department of Transportation. We're the agency that enforces safety along America's pipeline transportation network—that's *2.6 million miles* of underground pipelines.

Tomorrow is a significant day—and *not* just because it's Saturday! August 11th is National 8/11 Day; the perfect date to remind everyone to Call 8-1-1 *Before* You Dig.

8-1-1 is a toll-free national hotline to help protect you from hitting underground utility lines and pipelines while working on digging projects. That includes installing a mailbox, building a deck, planting a tree—anything that involves digging into the ground. Calling 8-1-1 two to three days before gives your local utility operators time to mark the locations of underground pipes and cables so you'll know what's below -

and be able to dig safely. Whenever you see those colored flags and paint, remember that someone called 8-1-1 to be safe.

Now, as a homeowner, I understand the reasons why people may overlook calling 8-1-1. Lots of us think, “I’m not a contractor, I’m just a homeowner. This is my property.” I cannot stress this enough—you should *always* call 8-1-1 before digging of any kind, even in your own backyard. The depth of utility lines varies, and there can be multiple lines in one area.

Others assume that making the call will cause unnecessary delays, but this assumption can be life-threatening. While serious pipeline incidents are rare, they *are* fatal. A third of fatal or injury-causing incidents are caused by someone accidentally hitting an underground pipeline while digging. In just a few minutes, Washington Gas will demonstrate just how dangerous a natural gas explosion can be. The single most important step to avoid a pipeline accident in your backyard? Calling 8-1-1.

Finally, many of us don’t realize this is not just wise, it is also the law. Whichever state you live in—including Washington, D.C.—you are responsible for making a call to get underground utilities marked prior to digging. If you hit an underground utility line while digging, you can harm yourself or those around you or disrupt service to an entire neighborhood.

As the summer winds down, there is sure to be a mad-dash to finish those last minute outdoor home improvement projects. Whether you’re a professional excavator or a backyard gardener, you need to make that call to 8-1-1 two to three days before you start your project.

Now, I’d like to introduce PHMSA’s deputy administrator and former fire chief, Tim Butters. Thank you and enjoy the rest of your summer.

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