



**REMARKS OF CARL T. JOHNSON
ADMINISTRATOR
PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CGA NEWS CONFERENCE: NATIONAL UTILITY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT
NATIONAL PRESS CLUB - WASHINGTON, DC
-- MAY 5, 2008 --**

Thank you, Bob, for that wonderful introduction.

On behalf of the Bush Administration, Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters, and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), it's an honor to be here today as we celebrate the one-year anniversary of 8-1-1 and the announcement of the first-ever National Utility Damage Assessment.

PHMSA's mission is to prevent the occurrence of harmful events through the movement of hazardous products by all transportation modes, including the nation's pipelines.

Prior to launching the 811 campaign last May, the Common Ground Alliance's (CGA) market research demonstrated the need for increased awareness of the One-Call process among homeowners.

When used, the simple, three digit number for initiating the marking of underground facilities, reduces risk and provides benefits not only to pipeline operators, but all underground facility owners.

Over the past twenty years, excavation related damage caused 35 percent of all serious pipeline incidents.

For natural gas distribution pipelines, six percent of all pipeline excavation related accidents were caused by homeowners in the year 2007, up four percentage points from the previous year.

To deal with this growing issue, we are beginning to target local public officials to receive damage prevention messages from pipeline operators.

We need collaboration now and PHMSA's support of the CGA is a great example of solving problems through education, without regulation.

A few minutes ago, Bob Kipp mentioned that approximately one utility line is damaged every minute in America, and 40 percent of these damages are caused by a failure to contact a local one-call center before digging.

Data like this is priceless and we need all of our stakeholders to work together to encourage every American to join us in protecting our underground infrastructure.

The launch of 8-1-1 was years in the making and required a level of collaboration previously unseen in the damage prevention industry.

The call volume data Bob presented a few minutes ago is a great reminder that this work was not done in vein.

Plain and simple, 8-1-1 is working, but call volume must continue to increase.

8-1-1 was created to eliminate confusion among multiple local one-call center phone numbers, but most importantly, it's easy to remember.

Based on the data in the National Utility Damage Assessment about a projected increase in do-it-yourself digging this year, it's comforting to know we have a strong message that will resonate with this group.

The 150 stakeholders who have announced their support of May as National Safe Digging Month is a clear sign of how well we're all coming together to promote damage prevention.

All Americans can get involved with National Safe Digging Month.

We all need to help one another in promoting safe digging practices.

If you know someone who is planning to dig, please tell them about 8-1-1.

If 9-1-1 is the number you call to report emergencies, 8-1-1 is the number to call to prevent them.

Thank you.

###