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## 811 Know What's Below – Call Before You Dig

A report released by the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the leading association dedicated to protecting underground utility lines and the safety of the people who dig near them, indicated an underground utility line is damaged during digging projects once every three minutes in the United States. The same report found that 34 percent of underground utility lines are damaged because a free phone call to 811 was never made.

For members of the Colorado Counties Casualty and Property Pool (CAPP), we are able to deny about half of our claims based on the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act (CGIA) because the county did call for a locate. Counties may also be immune when mobile equipment (tracked vehicles) is used for excavations. However, even with the protections of the CGIA, on average CAPP pays out \$10,000 per year for 30 claims for damaged underground cables and lines. When calling 811, individuals are connected to their local one-call center which notifies the appropriate utility companies of their intent to dig.

Professional locators are then sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags, spray paint, or

both. Striking a single line can cause injury, repair costs, fines, and inconvenient outages. Every digging project, no matter how large or small, warrants a call to 811. Grading ditches, installing a fence, building a deck or planting a tree are all examples of digging projects that need a call to 811 before starting.

The depth of utility lines can vary for a number of reasons, such as erosion, previous digging projects, and uneven surfaces. Utility lines need to be properly marked because even when digging only a few inches, the risk of striking an underground utility line still exists. Throughout the year, CGA works to remind homeowners and professional contractors alike to call 811 before digging to eliminate the risk of striking an underground utility line.

### What This Means to Counties

Road and bridge crews or anyone who is involved in an excavation project should call 811 several days in advance of excavating ground or grading ditches for a locate. Visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) for more information. 