

# News Release

**For Release:**

March 22, 2016

**Contact:**     **Bob Innes**  
**(804) 768-6410**  
**(804) 512-1425 - cellular**  
[rinnes@nisource.com](mailto:rinnes@nisource.com)

## **Stop the Madness! Always Call 811 Before You Dig!**

**Chester, VA – March 22, 2016** – This March make the commitment to always call 811 before digging, anytime, anywhere!

Every 36 hours Columbia Gas of Virginia (Columbia Gas) employees respond to a damaged natural gas line. In 2015, there were 240 times when someone placed themselves, our employees, local fire department personnel and the general public at serious risk of injury, damaging property or death. The Madness needs to stop!

“Every digging job – anytime, anywhere - requires a call to 811,” said Phil Wilson, VP and general manager for operations at Columbia Gas. “The failure to call 811 and have all underground utilities located is the number one risk to public and personal safety for Columbia Gas.”

Whether you’re planting a tree, installing a deck or digging a garden, Virginia law requires you to always call 811 at least three working days before you start to dig. A representative from each utility operator will mark the approximate location of the buried utilities at your dig site. It is a free service and will provide you with an understanding of which utility may be in conflict with your digging plans. Striking a utility can cause personal injury, repair costs, fines and loss of important utility service, including the ability to watch March Madness.

When you dial 811, you are connected to Virginia811, which notifies all the utility companies with facilities in the excavation area of the caller’s intent to dig. Qualified professional utility locators are sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags and color-coded spray paint. Each type of utility has designated marking colors to clearly identify the type of underground facilities. Yellow is the designated color for gas and oil pipelines.

The depth of utility lines can vary for a number of reasons, such as erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surfaces. Installing a mailbox, building a deck and planting a tree or garden are all examples of digging projects that should only begin a few days after making a call to 811.

Columbia Gas reminds any person planning to dig to following **four** simple steps and dig with care around underground utilities:

**Step 1** - Plan and call ahead – Always call 811 at least three days before digging, regardless of the familiarity with the property. By calling on Monday can insure utilities will be marked for the following weekend project.

**Step 2** – Allow required time for marking – Utility companies have 2-working days to mark their facilities beginning at 7:00 am on the next working day after calling 811. It does not include weekends or official state or Federal holidays.

**Step 3** – Respect and protect the marks – Do not cover up or destroy the utility markings as they indicate the approximate location of underground utilities. Contact the utility if marks are destroyed.

**Step 4** – Excavate carefully – Do not dig with mechanized equipment within 24 inches of either side of the utility markings. Once the utility line has been exposed protect the integrity of the facility while digging. Call the utility if you need assistance.

If during excavation or digging in the yard, the strong smell similar to “Rotten Eggs” is present, Columbia Gas urges you take the following actions:

- Immediately leave the area
- From a safe location away from the odor, call **911 and** Columbia Gas of Virginia at **800.544.5606**.
- Warn others to stay away from the area
- Leave windows and doors in their current position
- Avoid open flames or anything that could spark ignition - including cell phones, lights, garage doors or other power equipment.
- Do not attempt to operate pipeline valve or try to correct the leak.
- When emergency personnel arrive explain the situation to them.

### **About Columbia Gas of Virginia**

Columbia Gas of Virginia delivers safe, reliable and clean natural gas to over 252,000 customers in portions of Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, suburban Richmond, Central Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley, the Lynchburg region and parts of Western Virginia. NiSource (NYSE: NI) is one of the largest fully-regulated utility companies in the United States, serving approximately 3.5 million natural gas customers and 500,000 electric customers through its local Columbia Gas and NIPSCO brands. More information about Columbia Gas of Virginia and NiSource is available at [www.ColumbiaGasVa.com](http://www.ColumbiaGasVa.com) and [www.nisource.com](http://www.nisource.com). Always call 811 before you dig and Dig with CARE. ###