

# Survey reveals a third of U.S. homeowners experienced a utility interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic as 19.5 million Americans plan digging projects this spring

Making contact with 811 before digging for home improvement projects - including gardening, building a fence or installing a mailbox - can prevent damage to underground utility lines and keep communities safe and connected to essential services

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**Pennsylvania 811** →

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WEST MIFFLIN, Pa., April 8, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- In observance of National Safe Digging Month in April, Pennsylvania 811 announced results from a recent national survey. The results revealed that **a third of U.S. homeowners (33%) reported experiencing a utility service interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Additionally, of the 19.5 million U.S. homeowners who plan to dig this year for projects like gardening, building a fence or deck, installing a mailbox and more, **nearly two in five (37%) will put themselves and their communities at risk** by digging without contacting 811 beforehand to learn the approximate location of underground utilities.



Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in serious injuries, inconvenient service interruptions and costly repairs.



Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in serious injuries, inconvenient service disruptions and costly repairs when gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines are damaged. Contacting 811 before digging will help homeowners maintain essential utility service for themselves and neighbors and keep communities safe, by reducing the likelihood of accidentally digging into buried utility lines.

"The survey shows that experiencing utility interruptions has been a fairly common occurrence for Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no question that access to essential utility services is important to communities across the country. Given the current environment, disruptions to internet and phone services are particularly problematic, especially with so many people relying on these services more than ever to complete work, school and so much more," said William Kiger, President & CEO, Pennsylvania 811. "The survey also showed that millions of homeowners are using their extra time at home to complete projects that require digging, so it's of the utmost importance that homeowners contact 811 prior to digging. Doing so will help keep communities safe and connected to the critical utility services we all rely on every day."

The national public opinion survey of homeowners conducted in late February by the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the national association dedicated to protecting underground utility lines, people who dig near them, and their communities, also revealed that one in five American homeowners (20%) have been more likely to do a DIY home improvement involving digging since the pandemic began – particularly gardening projects: **56% of homeowners who are planning to plant a tree or shrub this year said they were more likely to dig during the pandemic.**

The most popular planned projects cited among surveyed homeowners who plan to dig include:

- **Planting a tree or shrub: 62%**
- Building a fence: 37%
- Building a deck or patio: 32%
- Installing a mailbox: 20%
- Installing a pool: 6%
- Something else: 26%

As part of National Safe Digging Month, Pennsylvania 811 encourages homeowners to take the following steps when planning a digging project this spring:

- Always contact 811 at least three business days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Plan ahead. Be sure to notify 811 on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend. This will provide ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.
- Confirm that all lines have been marked.
- Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that the contractor has contacted 811. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.
- Visit [www.pa1call.org/notify](http://www.pa1call.org/notify) for complete info.

Everyone who contacts 811 at least three business days before digging is connected to Pennsylvania 811, the state's one call notification center. Pennsylvania 811 will take your information and communicate it to the local utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint, flags or both. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

### ***About Pennsylvania 811***

*Pennsylvania One Call System, Inc. is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and registered as a non-profit corporation under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our purpose is to prevent damage to underground facilities. To promote safety, we provide an efficient and effective communications network among project owners, designers, excavators, and facility owners. A 35-member Board of Directors governs the organization. The composition of the Board includes representation from the following industries: Electric, Gas (including an owner or operator associated with Conventional oil and gas wells and a facility owner representative of a pipeline associated with Unconventional oil and gas wells), Municipal, Pipeline, Telecommunications, Telephone, Water, Cable Television, Associate, Contractor, Designer, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, and the Department of Transportation. For more information, visit Pennsylvania 811 on the web at [www.pa1call.org](http://www.pa1call.org)*

## **About CGA**

*CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to North American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the preeminent source of damage prevention data and information in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.*

## **About the study**

*SSRS conducted a national omnibus phone study between Feb. 23-28, 2021, on behalf of CGA. A total of 720 American homeowners ages 18+ were asked for their opinions on home and property improvement project topics. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3.65 at the 95% confidence level.*

SOURCE Pennsylvania 811

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