

# PSC Consumer Connection



*Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century*

Issue 30 - April 2009

A quarterly publication of the Missouri Public Service Commission  
Public Information & Education Department

## **PSC Observes National Safe Digging Month -- Consumers Are Reminded To Call Before You Dig**

Spring has arrived. With spring, increased excavation activities occur around homes and businesses. The Missouri Public Service Commission reminds everyone that **it is very important to call before doing any excavation activity.**

"Underground utility lines of all types are hit every day in our state due to careless excavation and digging," said PSC Chairman Robert M. Clayton III.

"In 2007, over 3,400 underground natural gas lines alone were hit in Missouri. On average, that's more than 60 a week.

When underground utility lines are hit, there could be injuries or fatalities; customers could be faced with utility service outages; and repairs to those lines cost millions of dollars a year," Clayton said.



### **DIG SAFE. DIG SMART.** **KNOW MISSOURI'S GROUND RULES.**

**MAKE THE CALL:** Many utility company facilities, including natural gas pipelines, are located underground and out of sight. If you are planning any excavation work, from digging in your yard to a commercial project, Missouri law requires you to notify the Missouri One Call System at **1-800-**

**DIG-RITE (1-800-344-7483) or dial 811, at least three days but not more than 10 working days in advance, except in the case of an emergency.**

After you make the call, Missouri law requires that all utilities with underground facilities affected by the excavation determine if the planned dig is near any underground facilities. If



needed, they will survey and mark the area where utility lines are located. **Do not begin digging until all of the utilities in the area have been located and marked.**

**RESPECT THE MARKS:** After it is determined that markings are required, the facility owner will dispatch personnel who will locate and mark the excavation site with paint, stakes or flags. Utilities mark their facilities according to specific guidelines and color codes. **Respect the markings when you dig.**

**DIG SAFELY:** Digging carelessly can cause the disruption of vital utility services and environmental damage, or even the loss of life.

#### **Did You Know?**

-- 40 percent of all U.S. digging damages result from not calling before digging.

-- Utilities are buried only a few inches underground, making them easy to strike even during shallow digging projects.

#### **What To Do If You Smell Natural Gas**

-- Evacuate the building immediately.

-- Do not operate electrical switches.

-- Do not smoke, use lighters, matches or any other open flame.

-- Do not start your vehicle if it is in an attached garage.

-- Leave your home and call the natural gas company to report the odor and its approximate location.



-- Do not call from inside your house. Calling from a phone inside your home could create a spark that could cause an explosion.

## Safety Tips For Operating Generators

Take extra caution when using a portable generator during extended power outages. They do provide a good source of power, but if they are installed or used improperly, they can be deadly.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offers the following cautions on the use of gas-powered generators:

### Shock and Electrocutation

-- **Don't connect your generator directly to your home's wiring.** Connecting a portable electric generator directly to your household wiring can be deadly to you and others.

-- A generator that is directly connected to your home's wiring can "backfeed" onto the power lines connected to your home. Utility transformers can then "step-up" or increase this "backfeed" to thousands of volts — enough to kill a utility lineman making outage repairs a long way from your house.



-- The only safe way to connect a portable electric generator to your existing wiring is to have a licensed electrical contractor install a transfer switch. The transfer switch transfers power from the utility power lines to the power coming from your generator.

-- **Never plug a portable electric generator into a regular household outlet.** Plugging a generator into a regular household outlet can energize "dead" power lines and injure neighbors or utility workers. Connect individual appliances that have their outdoor-rated power cords directly to the receptacle outlet of the generator.

-- **To prevent electrical shock, make sure your generator is properly grounded.** Consult your manufacturer's manual for correct grounding procedures.

## Don't Overload The Generator

-- Do not operate more appliances and equipment than the output rating of the generator. Overloading your generator can seriously damage your appliances and electronics.

## Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

-- A portable generator uses an internal combustion engine that emits deadly carbon monoxide. Never use a generator indoors or in an attached garage.

## Be Energy Efficient Website

Check out the new website [beenergyefficient.org](http://beenergyefficient.org)

"BEE" stands for "Be Energy Efficient," and is aimed at helping you remain in control of your energy bills. There are steps every household can take today to minimize energy use and stabilize related costs.

Conservation is an all-season opportunity. Energy saving tips for both the heating and cooling seasons can be found on this website.



This project is a co-initiative of the Missouri Public Service Commission and Missouri Department of Natural Resources Energy Center.

"BEE" is also supported by many organizations and utilities serving the state of Missouri.

**For printed materials** regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-522-2760 or email [gregg.ochoa@psc.mo.gov](mailto:gregg.ochoa@psc.mo.gov)

### Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission  
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**  
or email: [pscinfo@psc.mo.gov](mailto:pscinfo@psc.mo.gov)

**Mail your inquiry or complaint to:**  
Missouri Public Service Commission  
Consumer Services Department  
P.O. Box 360  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

