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Before you start digging for a project on your property, make a call to 811

You call 911 in an emergency, ring up 411 for directory assistance, and dial 311 for municipal information and details on nonemergency services.

And before you do any project on your property that requires digging—for instance, when you build a deck, plant a tree, or install a mailbox—the number to call is 811.

The federally mandated [Call Before You Dig program](#) makes it a snap for you to get utility lines on your property marked for free before work starts. The Call Before You Dig Web site provides links to the [appropriate office in your state](#). Some states allow you to register for utility marking online.

Why bother to mark the utility lines? Doing so eliminates damage to utility lines that could result in a dangerous situation or service disruption, not to mention possible fines and the cost of repairing any damage. In 2009, approximately 75,000 underground utility lines were damaged because they weren't marked according to the [Common Ground Alliance](#), an industry group that works to prevent damage to underground infrastructure.

You should call 811 at least 48 to 72 business hours before any digging will start. Call Before You Dig will notify local utilities, which will then use paint or flags to mark the approximate locations of the lines.

Red is for electric lines, orange for communications/cable TV lines, blue for potable water, green for sewer or drainage, yellow for gas or petroleum, and purple for reclaimed water. White markings indicate the area where the digging will take place.



Calling 811 before digging takes places on your property could eliminate a call to 911.