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APRIL *Safety Talk*

Topic: Safe Digging Month

Our municipalities sit on top of a very complex underground infrastructure that provides essential goods and services to their communities.

Worker and public safety, and the environment, are jeopardized when improper digging puts this infrastructure at risk.

April is proclaimed by many municipalities as “Safe Digging Month”, to promote safe excavation practices among municipalities, contractors and homeowners.

Municipal staff should always be following extensive safe excavation practices. Call before you dig, locate buried infrastructure, expose any conflicting buried facilities before using mechanical excavation equipment, and dig with care are all steps to be taken in safe excavation practices.

In addition, workers and supervisors should conduct an in-field risk assessment before each days’ work, and after breaks. Changes can occur due to weather, vandalism, or other incidents that occur overnight.

All workers involved in excavations need to receive training in hazard recognition and how to control those hazards.

Damage to underground utilities is the main cause of exposure to hazards. Knowing what underground facilities are located in or near your digging jobsite is essential if dangerous accidents are to be avoided. These hazards include: electricity, gas, fire, water, chemicals, toxic atmospheres, biohazards, asbestos exposure, disruptions of essential services etc. Other hazards associated with excavation of underground utilities include working with mobile equipment, confined spaces, working in excavations and overhead hazards. Awareness and following safe procedures specific to these hazards must be followed.

WHEREAS,

Each year the integrity of BC’s underground infrastructure is jeopardized by damage during ground disturbance activities by those who fail to **Call Before You Dig**; and

WHEREAS,

The consequences of damage to buried facilities can include service disruptions, environmental contamination, property damage, personal injury and even death; and

WHEREAS,

The BC Common Ground Alliance and the BC Municipal Safety Association and its members promote the principles of Damage Prevention Best Practices, including the need to **Call Before You Dig**; and

WHEREAS,

Ground disturbers, including contractors, municipal workers, homeowners and landowners can save time and money and keep our province safe and connected by following Damage Prevention Best Practices including making that one simple call to BC One-Call; and

WHEREAS,

The stakeholders in the buried facility damage prevention process – the digging community, buried facility owners/operators, buried facility locators, regulatory agencies, training organizations and the one-call centre – all agree that the prevention of damage to buried facilities is a shared responsibility.

NOW, THEREFORE,

I do hereby proclaim, on behalf of _____,
the month of April 2015 as

SAFE DIGGING MONTH

and encourage all ground disturbers to always **Call Before You Dig**.