



For Immediate Release: May 24, 2021

Call before you dig to prevent dangerous pipeline damage

(Anchorage, AK) – While warmer spring weather is thawing soils and inviting excavation, any contractors, engineers or earthmovers who fail to “call before they dig” risk causing dangerous, even fatal, damage to natural gas, oil or fuel pipelines.

“There is plenty of pent-up demand in the construction industry to get busy and take advantage of our brief building season,” said Anthony Strupulis of the Division of Oil and Gas, the state pipeline coordinator. “But it is important for all operators to take time to conduct their earthwork safety to prevent seriously injuring themselves, bystanders, infrastructure or the environment.”

Alaska law (AS 42.30.400 – 490) requires those planning to excavate to provide advance notice of their plans to local utility operators, or to a national 8-1-1 hotline before they sink a shovel. Digging in most areas requires at least two working days’ notice; work in remote or unattended areas requires 10–20 business days’ notice.

In addition to advance notice requirements, the law assigns responsibility for locating and marking underground pipelines at different depths and locations, requires pipeline locations be included in project documents, and establishes sanctions for violations, which can include fines or injunctive relief.

While the trans-Alaska oil pipeline (also known as “TAPS”) system that delivers North Slope oil to Valdez is the state’s largest and best-known pipeline, there are also many large- and small-scale natural gas transmission lines, gas station tanks and fuel lines, and other pipelines, Strupulis said. Accidental damage to any of them could contaminate air or water, ignite fires or explosions, damage wild habitat, and cause a range of environmental harm.

For more information about excavator responsibilities, or to learn how to safely comply with state law, visit: <https://www.811ak.com>, or call 8-1-1.

CONTACT: Anthony Strupulis, (907) 269-6419; anthony.strupulis@alaska.gov

###