



CenterPoint Energy Reminds Minnesotans to 'Call Before You Dig!'

MINNEAPOLIS, May 10, 2005 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Spring weather has Minnesotans thinking about their landscaping and yard projects for the year, and CenterPoint Energy (NYSE: CNP) reminds anyone who plans to excavate or dig in their property to call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) to have their utility, telecommunications and other underground service lines marked prior to breaking ground.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20020930/CNPLOGO>)

"Gopher State One Call services are free and required by law. The services help callers avoid the safety hazards of hitting lines, as well as the inconvenience of disrupting underground utility or other services and the costs associated with their repair," said Terry Crooker, a technical training specialist with CenterPoint Energy. "All they have to do is plan ahead and make a call."

To contact GSOC, call (651) 454-0002 or 1-800-252-1166. The Web site address is <http://www.gopherstateonecall.org> .

GSOC is a statewide system that notifies all Minnesota underground utilities of proposed excavations. Upon notification, utilities are dispatched to a home to mark the lines. Callers must give GSOC at least 48 hours notice, excluding weekends and holidays, and should not begin work until all appropriate underground lines are marked. They should use white paint or stakes to mark the areas to be excavated, exercising care when placing them in the ground. Callers are also responsible for marking any private customer- owned facilities. If a caller contracts with a professional excavator, the contractor is responsible for calling GSOC.

When calling GSOC, callers should be prepared to provide the attendant with the following information: Name; phone number; street address; dig location; nearest intersection; type of work; and start date and time.

GSOC provides each caller with a job ticket number that should be kept until the work is completed in case questions arise. Each utility line is marked with flags and a spray painted line, which usually fades or is mowed off. The lines and flags are color coded for the service they represent: yellow for gas, oil or steam; red for electric; orange for telephone and cable TV; blue for water; green for sewer; pink for temporary survey markings; purple for reclaimed water and irrigation; and white for proposed excavation. Marked utilities are only valid for 14 days.

"When using power equipment for excavation, leave at least two feet of clearance on each side of the line marking," Crooker advised. "If you need to excavate closer than two feet from the line, carefully use hand tools to do so. Also, do not try to estimate a line's depth because this can be affected by erosion and other factors. Carefully hand dig to identify the exact depth and location of the line."

What to do if you smell natural gas:

- * Leave immediately. Do not use electric switches, your own phone, or anything that could cause a spark. Do not return until given permission by the utility or public safety officials.
- * Go immediately to a safe location and call the CenterPoint Energy - Emergency Service/Gas Leak Hotline: (612) 372-5050 or 1-800-722-9326 or call 911.
- * Do not assume someone else has reported the leak.
- * Leave all repairs to properly equipped and trained utility technicians. Never try to repair a natural gas leak yourself.

Headquartered in Houston, TX, CenterPoint Energy is a domestic energy delivery company that includes electric transmission and distribution, natural gas distribution and sales, and interstate pipeline and gathering operations. The company serves nearly five million metered customers in six states and has assets of about \$17 billion. With more than 9,000 employees, CenterPoint Energy and its predecessor companies have been in business for over 130 years. In Minnesota, CenterPoint Energy is the state's largest natural gas distribution company, serving more than 760,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in over 240 communities. Home Service Plus(R), the company's non-regulated business in Minnesota, offers products and services in the categories of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and appliance repair, and HVAC and hearth equipment sales. Visit the Web site at <http://www.CenterPointEnergy.com> .

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