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COMMISSIONERS
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Debra A. Howland

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

TDD Access: Relay NH
1-800-735-2964

Tel. (603) 271-2431

FAX No. 271-3878

Website:
www.puc.nh.gov

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Contact: Amanda Noonan, Director
Consumer Services and External Affairs
Public Utilities Commission
(603) 271-2431

Federal Evaluation of New Hampshire's Dig Safe Program Results in Perfect Score

Concord, N.H.

A report issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, gave the Dig Safe program administered by the Public Utilities Commission a perfect score. It was the first ever comprehensive federal evaluation of the program.

"Excavation damage poses a serious safety risk to excavators, to the public living or working in the area, and to the environment," said Martin Honigberg, Chair of the Public Utilities Commission. "We are very pleased that our Dig Safe program received such a positive evaluation."

States must be able to demonstrate they adequately meet seven criteria used by PHMSA to assess the effectiveness of damage prevention enforcement programs. The criteria evaluate:

- whether the state has enforcement authority including civil penalties;
- whether there is an enforcement body;
- whether the state is using its authority and making enforcement records available to the public;
- whether the state has a reliable means of learning about damages;
- whether the state has damage investigation practices that are adequate to determine the at-fault party when damage occurs;
- whether the state, at a minimum, requires excavators to call 811 before digging, respect all marked underground facilities, report any damage as soon as is practical, and call 911 if a release of gas occurs; and
- whether exemptions from the damage prevention program are limited and that written justification is provided for any exemption.

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