



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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April declared *Safe Digging Month* in Saskatchewan; Sask 1st Call celebrates with launch of App

The Government of Saskatchewan, in partnership with Sask 1st Call and the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA), is declaring April *Safe Digging Month* to promote the importance of safety when working around underground infrastructure. With temperatures on the rise, April typically kicks off construction season in the province, and industry organizations would like to remind the public the importance of digging safely.

New for this year, Sask 1st Call has created a smartphone App, available in iTunes and Google Playstore, for requesting line locates, making the request process simpler and faster.

“The introduction of a Sask 1st Call App is an exciting innovation using the latest technology to make work sites across Saskatchewan even safer this year,” said Jim Reiter, Minister of Government Relations. “Striking underground lines can result in costly repairs, loss of services to communities, serious injuries or even fatalities. Whether you’re a contractor or a homeowner, using the Sask 1st Call App should be the first step of your safe digging plan.”

Using the Google Map program, the App allows the user to identify the exact location they will be working by ‘white lining’ a perimeter of the work site on the App. For rural use, the App can pinpoint the legal land locations – along with latitude and longitude – to ensure the precise location. Qualified line locating technicians will be on site within two working days after the request is made.

“The Sask 1st Call App is just a click away and continues to be a free service, so it’s an even simpler process to make digging safely a priority,” said Barb Tchozewski, Manager of Sask 1st Call. “The App’s features allow you to take pictures of your dig site with your smartphone and attach those to the line locate request. This helps the line locate technician see the proposed dig site, ensuring any buried infrastructure is properly marked.”

Saskatchewan’s Crown utilities – SaskPower, SaskEnergy and SaskTel – saw an overall decrease last year in underground infrastructure damage province-wide with 707 contacts to buried lines, compared to 1,037 in 2013. One of the key damage prevention programs credited with this reduction was the Sask 1st Call Safety Patrols. The first of its kind in Canada, the Safety Patrol Program targeted new developments in the Saskatoon and Regina regions. From May to October, patrollers stopped to check that contractors and

homeowners had line locates completed prior to the start of excavation, and that a safe work plan was in place.

“While technology with the Sask 1st Call App will make digging safer, the success of the Safety Patrols in 2014 proved there still remains an important role in today’s wired world for the ‘boots on the ground’ grassroots approach,” said Daryl Posehn, Executive Director of the SCGA. “The program is being expanded to patrol more communities across the province for the 2015 digging season, with utilities in other provinces looking at the Saskatchewan model to reduce damage in their jurisdictions.”

The Safety Patrol program will continue to monitor the Regina and Saskatoon regions, while expanding its coverage for 2015 to reach more communities throughout the province including: Weyburn, Estevan, Yorkton, Swift Current, Kindersley, Rosetown, Gravelbourg, Leader, Maple Creek, Shaunavon, Melville, Prince Albert and North Battleford.

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The Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA) is a member-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring worker and public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of services by promoting effective damage prevention practices in connection with underground infrastructure activities. For more information please go to www.scga.ca

Sask 1st Call is a not-for-profit “**Call Before You Dig**” underground facility location service for contractors and homeowners who are planning to dig or excavate. Within two working days of the request, the member companies of Sask 1st Call will locate the underground facilities at the project site, allowing work to continue without impacting buried infrastructure, or disrupting service to customers. Sask. 1st Call has 40 members (including SaskEnergy/TransGas, SaskPower, SaskTel and pipeline companies) and represents more than 400,000 kilometres of buried infrastructure across Saskatchewan. For more information please go to www.sask1stcall.com