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New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Continues to Highlight Importance of Calling 811 Before You Dig during Underground Damage Prevention Month

\$162,000 in total fines levied against 54 parties for violations of the Underground Facility Protection Act

TRENTON, N.J. – Today, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (Board) continued to highlight New Jersey’s Underground Damage Prevention Month as part of its ongoing utility infrastructure damage prevention efforts by highlighting potential penalties for failure to comply with the Underground Facility Protection Act (the Act). The Board approved fines totaling \$162,000 against 54 excavators and operators of underground facilities alleged to have violated the Act.

The Act requires everyone who plans to dig to call 811 at least three days prior to beginning any digging projects to allow for free mark-outs of underground utility infrastructure. It is critically important for contractors, excavators and property owners to do so for the safety of the public, workers, utility infrastructure and potentially first responders.

“Governor Christie has proclaimed April as New Jersey Underground Damage Prevention Month to raise awareness of the requirement to call 811 three days prior to beginning a digging project,” said Richard S. Mroz, President, N.J. Board of Public Utilities. “We want homeowners and contractors to be safe and to help protect underground utility infrastructure by calling for the free mark-outs before they dig. If safety is not reason enough, then perhaps fines for failure to do so will help convince contractors and property owners to make the call.”

“During the Christie Administration, the Board has approved the investment of over \$8 billion in utility infrastructure projects to improve the safety, reliability and resiliency of utility service. In addition to protecting the public, we need to protect these substantial investments on behalf of all ratepayers.”

The New Jersey One Call Center receives over 600,000 calls annually resulting in more than 3 million mark-outs. Last year, the Board approved over \$1 million dollars in fines as a result of non-compliant excavation projects.

The settlements approved today do not include any cases involving catastrophic incidents involving death or major property damage. These infractions involve failure to call 811, failure to use reasonable care when digging around marked out infrastructure, and mismarking of underground facilities.