



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Mark Wigfield, 202-418-0253
Email: mark.wigfield@fcc.gov

FCC Designates 811 as the Nationwide Number to Protect Pipelines, Utilities from Excavation Damage

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today designated 811 as the nationwide number for contractors and others to call before conducting excavation activities.

This nationwide abbreviated dialing code will provide an effective replacement for an array of numbers used across the nation to connect to communication systems operated by underground utility operators and state and local governments. “One Call” notification systems enable contractors to give advance notice of their plans to excavate so that utility companies can mark underground facilities prior to excavation to prevent damage to these facilities.

The Commission ordered that 811 be operational two years from publication of its designation in the Federal Register. All service providers must use 811 as the national abbreviated dialing code and discontinue use of other dialing arrangements for access to One Call Centers. One Call Centers must provide their toll-free numbers to carriers to ensure that callers who dial 811 do not incur toll charges.

Established by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 1994, the nation’s 71 One Call Centers receive about 15 million calls annually. An estimated 40% of the incidents in which underground pipelines and other facilities were damaged were caused by those who did not call before digging.

In the 2002 Pipeline Safety Improvement Act, the federal government strengthened its support for the One Call program by requiring that the DOT and FCC establish a three-digit, nationwide toll-free number to be used by state One Call systems.

811 is one of only eight “N11” codes, five of which have been assigned for nationwide use. Those assigned are: 211 for government information and referral services; 311 for non-emergency police and government services; 511 for travel and information services; 711 for telephone relay services for the hearing impaired; and 911 for emergencies. Prior to today’s decision, the Commission had not assigned 411, 611 and 811 for nationwide use, but these numbers have been widely used by carriers for various purposes.

Use of other abbreviated dialing arrangements for access to One Call Centers would have made certain area codes or local exchanges unusable, resulting in considerable expense, possible confusion, and the loss of approximately eight million telephone numbers.

Action by the Commission, March 10, 2005, by Order, FCC 05-59. Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps, Martin and Adelstein.

Wireline Competition Bureau Staff Contact: Regina Brown, 202-418-0792,
regina.brown@fcc.gov

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