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Safe Electricity Encourages Homeowners to Look Out for Power Lines

Cleaning gutters, trimming bushes, planting trees, and laying stone paths are just some of the projects homeowners undertake to maintain and improve their homes. Before tackling the next project, Safe Electricity encourages homeowners to take the time and the necessary preparations to do so safely.

“Before tackling any project, take a few minutes to prepare for the job,” advises Molly Hall, executive director of the Energy Education Council’s Safe Electricity program. “Begin by making sure you’ve got the right tools for the job. Also check cords for any cracks or frayed insulation and proper connections. Then take note of potential hazards in the work area such as overhead power lines.”

Even professional contracted workers are not immune to electrical accidents, and it is important to keep safety in mind. Preparing for the job is important part of tackling an outdoor project safely.

A U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission report found that ladders are involved in more electrocutions than any other product. So before taking a ladder out, be sure to look up and look out for overhead power

National 811 Day Reminds Residents to Exercise Safe Digging Practices

Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas reminded residents planning late summer landscaping projects to call the Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators (JULIE) 8-1-1 Hotline at least 48 hours/two business days before digging to prevent injury, outages, or unnecessary damage to underground facilities.

This reminder coincided with National 811 Day on Aug.11, a day that promotes the use of the free service to locate and mark underground utility lines to help prevent serious injury, costly property damage and inconvenient utility service interruptions.

JULIE is a not-for-profit corporation that provides contractors, excavators, homeowners, and others a free service through a single toll-free phone number, 8-1-1 or (800) 892-0123 to call for the locating and marking of underground utility facilities. Calling 8-1-1 to reach JULIE should be every homeowner and contractor’s first step before putting

a shovel in the ground and performing any excavation, gardening, construction, or digging.

Natural gas and electric lines are buried underneath the property and could be in striking distance, even for a simple project like erecting a tent for a holiday party. It is important that contractors, workers and residents and anyone planning work that requires digging to follow pipeline safety procedures and be aware of safe digging practices.

Projects like landscaping yard areas, installing a mailbox, and building a deck or patio are the types of projects that require a call to 8-1-1. Location specialists will come to the home or business to locate, and mark all underground utility services in the area free of charge.

Calling 8-1-1 well in advance to have locates completed, will help ensure you can start summer projects safely. People can start projects safely as planned and ensure there are no disruptions to electric or natural gas service, possibly to entire neighborhoods.

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FROM THE STAFF

It's hard to tell whether the summer has flown by because it certainly hasn't been a normal summer in terms of the legislative experience. In that respect, the summer has been a continuation of the spring (session, that is). Those of us whose body clocks operate on legislative time are definitely out of synch from our normal rhythm. But, at least the calendar tells us the summer is almost over and autumn is upon us. Whether that means there will actually be a Fall Veto Session is anyone's guess. **IEF**

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Safe Electricity

Lines. If you have overhead service, also be careful when working near power lines attached to your house. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet away from lines. Never trim trees near power lines — leave that to the professionals.

Pay attention to your electric tools and extension cords. Check the condition of cords before each use. Look for fraying or cracking along the entire length of the cord and for damage to the plug or sockets. Replace any damaged extension cords or tools.

Be sure to only use extension cords rated for outdoor use, and remember to unplug them when not in use. Extension cords are designed for temporary use only.

When purchasing an extension cord or power tool, only buy products that have been certified by a recognized safety laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), ETL, or CSA.

Remember that electricity and water are a dangerous mix. If it is raining or the ground is wet, do not use electric power or yard tools. Never touch circuit breakers or fuses when you are wet or standing in water.

To help prevent electric shock, make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If your outdoor outlets do not have them, use a portable GFCI or have a professional install GFCI outlets.

Keep electric equipment at least 10 feet from wet areas, and always store power tools and extension cords in dry areas. Replace any that get damaged by water.

If planting a tree in the yard, consider placement. Select a planting location that will not interfere with utility lines both in the air and underground. Tree branches can interfere with overhead power lines, and roots can do the same with underground utilities.

When taking on a project that requires any sort of digging, such as planting trees or building fence, be sure to call 811 first. It is important to have underground utilities marked in order to know where it is safe to dig. Hitting an underground line can cause serious injury, disrupt service, and can be expensive to repair.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org. **IEF**

Illinois American Water Begins Construction on One Million Gallon Elevated Water Tank

Illinois American Water's Champaign County District is investing approximately \$3 million to enhance water service to customers. Construction of a one million gallon elevated water storage tank has begun at the corner of I-72 and Duncan Road in Champaign.

"Water storage tanks serve a vital role in our water distribution systems by enabling consistent water pressure in customers' homes and businesses, providing adequate water supply during high demand periods and for fire protection," said Ron Smith, Sr. Manager Field Services and Production for the Champaign County District.

The composite tank will be completed next summer.

The U.S. EPA reports that the nation's water utilities will need to make more than \$384 billion in infrastructure investments by 2030 to ensure public health. These investments include replacing thousands of miles of pipe and upgrades to treatment plants, storage tanks and other assets. Illinois American Water's investment in the Champaign County District is just another example of continuous investments and improvements being made, helping to meet the demands of today's customers and planning for the future. **IEF**

Ameren Illinois President Richard Mark Recognized by Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce

Ameren Illinois President Richard J. Mark was presented the Corporate Leadership Award by the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce (ILBCC) during its 10th Annual Statewide Convention last month in Peoria. The award is presented to an individual who champions diversity within his or her company.

“Our executive team looks very closely at who is selected for our awards,” said Larry Ivory, president and CEO of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce. “Richard Mark was an easy choice. He is accessible, committed, supportive of minority business, and of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce. Richard Mark is also a great humanitarian; always working to positively impact the community. The Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce was proud to present him with the 2015 Outstanding Corporate Leadership Award.”

“I am honored our efforts to build a diverse culture have been recognized by one of the state’s leading business organizations,” said Mark. “As the largest energy delivery company in downstate Illinois, Ameren Illinois has a significant role to play in growing and developing the communities we serve. Having a more inclusive workplace ensures we not only succeed as a company, but we create opportunities for others throughout our entire region to thrive.”

Ameren's commitment to diversity and inclusion has also been recognized nationally. In April, Ameren Corporation was named the number one company on DiversityInc's list of top utilities for diversity. This is the fifth consecutive year Ameren has been recognized among the top five utilities nationally for creating an inclusive workplace, reaching diverse customers and having strong supplier diversity. **IEF**

Mayor Emanuel and CPL Commissioner Bannon Announce Expansion of Early Learning Educational Investments

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Brian Bannon at the Albany Park Library branch recently announced a significant expansion of Chicago Public Library early learning spaces across the city. Thanks to a \$2.5 million grant from Exelon Corporation to the Chicago Public Library Foundation, CPL will open an 18,000 square foot flagship location at Harold Washington Library Center with 14 additional satellite locations to follow. This is the largest single gift ever made to the early learning initiatives at Chicago Public Library, and the expansion supports joint goals of the Library and the City of Chicago to provide access to quality early educational programming year round.

“There is nothing that’s more important than our kids. Giving them a quality education from day one and helping provide their parents with the tools to be consistent and active partners in their children’s education is the best investment any of us can make,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “Whether it is pre-K in our schools or programming in our libraries, we are giving every child the support they need in their early years to ensure their success in college, career, and in life.”

The innovative early learning spaces will incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and the five practices of early learning – Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play -- into the space itself. The early learning areas and CPL librarians will also focus on supporting parents and caregivers as a child’s primary teacher.

“We’re honored to be the primary sponsor of Mayor Emanuel’s program to create early childhood learning centers at public libraries throughout the city,” said Chris Crane, president and CEO of Exelon. “Given Exelon’s strong commitment to technical education and employment in Chicago, we’re particularly pleased the program will include an emphasis on early science, technology, engineering and math education.” **IEF**

Energy Association Coordinates Illinois Night Reception

The Illinois Energy Association will coordinate the Illinois Night Cocktail Reception at the 127th Annual Convention of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners in Austin, Texas. The reception will be held from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, at Bob's Steak & Chop House.

Illinois Night provides an opportunity for all convention attendees from the state to get together for a social hour during the four-day convention.

Reservations to attend the Illinois Night event can be made until November 3 by contacting the Energy Association offices at 217-523-7348. **IEF**

NARUC Annual Convention in Austin, Texas

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) will hold its Annual Convention in Austin, Texas, from November 8-11, 2015. State Commissioners and staff members from around the country will meet in various committees and subcommittees with an eye toward developing NARUC policy on several important issues of interest to the regulatory community.

Members of the Illinois Commerce Commission serve key NARUC policy committees. Registration for the Convention remains opened. **IEF**

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