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## **National Fuel Reminds the Public to Call Before You Dig**

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2020 poses a different Safe Digging Month*

**(April 1, 2020) WILLIAMSVILLE, N.Y.** – In recognition of April designated as Safe Digging Month, National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation (National Fuel) is reminding homeowners and professional contractors the importance of calling 811 before starting a digging project, and urges homeowners to delay the beginning of significant digging projects during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

“While Dig Safely NY and New York 811 have remained fully operational through this pandemic, we ask consumers, businesses, and contractors not to begin any non-essential construction,” said Karen L. Merkel, National Fuel’s spokesperson. “Delaying the start of non-essential home digging projects can help safeguard our citizens, protect utility crews, and avoid accidental damage to underground lines that could disrupt utility services during this extremely stressful time.”

New York state law requires residents to call 811 – a free service – before digging to prevent accidental damage to underground utility lines. Homeowners and contractors should call 811 at least three and no more than 10 business days in advance of the start of their projects. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in serious injuries, service disruptions and costly repairs.

As always, if you smell gas, leave fast! If a rotten-egg natural gas odor is present, leave the premises immediately and call National Fuel’s emergency line, 1-800-444-3130, from a different location. If you smell gas outdoors, call National Fuel’s emergency number and provide the address nearest to the site of the odor.

National Fuel recognizes that during these unsettling times there may be instances where customers find themselves facing financial difficulties. Customers whose income situation has changed in the last few weeks may be eligible for HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program), a federally funded program that provides financial heating assistance to those who qualify. Please visit [heaphelps.com](http://heaphelps.com) for additional information.

Customers who are having trouble paying their natural gas bills are encouraged to call National Fuel’s customer service at 1-800-365-3234 to discuss available payment programs and services. Utility shutoffs have been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and late charges for customers impacted will be waived.

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation is the Utility segment of National Fuel Gas Company, a diversified energy company that is engaged in a number of natural gas-related activities. The Utility provides natural gas service to more than 740,000 customers in Western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. For more information, visit [www.nationalfuel.com](http://www.nationalfuel.com).