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GOVERNOR SIGNS DAMAGE PREVENTION PROCLAMATION

NEW MEXICO – Providing and maintaining a safe, well-protected infrastructure throughout the state is of utmost importance to the citizens of New Mexico. Today, Governor Bill Richardson signed a document proclaiming September 2008 “Damage Prevention Month” to emphasize this fact.

September was chosen to coincide with the third annual New Mexico Regional Common Ground Alliance (NMRCGA) Expo and Conference, an event dedicated to all aspects of excavation throughout the state. The conference brings together water, gas, electricity and telecommunications - and one-call professionals - to discuss best practices and the latest technology to improve the protection of underground facilities. The NMRCGA was established in 2005 to promote public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of underground infrastructure and facilities by promoting effective damage prevention as a shared responsibility.

Last year the governor signed a bill (HB908) making it mandatory that all underground facility owners, as defined by New Mexico law, belong to a one-call system. Facility owners have until April 15, 2008, to comply with the new law. New Mexico One Call (NMOC), a not-for-profit organization that provides professional damage prevention resources for excavators and homeowners statewide, is one of the founding organizations of NMRCGA. It plays a crucial role in damage prevention by ensuring that everyone follows the “Call Before You Dig” mandate. Federal and state laws require any excavator ó professional or do-it-yourselfer ó to notify all underground facilities before digging. Facility owners are then required to locate and mark all underground facilities within two working days so the excavator can avoid them when digging.

In 2007, a new federally mandated 811 number was designated by the FCC as the national “Call Before You Dig” phone number to eliminate the confusion of multiple phone numbers and help save lives by minimizing damages to underground utilities. One easy phone call to 811 quickly begins the process of getting underground utility lines marked. NMOC personnel notify affected utility companies, who send crews to mark underground lines for free.

For more information, please call Gary Sloman, Executive Director of NMOC at 254-7303 or Gwen Canova-Kinzie at 254-7315, or visit www.nmrcga.org.

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