

# Post Rock Extension District Column

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## **Don't forget to call "811" BEFORE repairing fence from the wind and fires!**

I am reflecting this holiday season and so thankful for all the blessings, but also very saddened by the recent damage that several farm families suffered last week from the wind and fires!!!! Please keep them all in our prayers! We definitely have very caring farm communities with so many donations and volunteers, collecting and delivering the needed supplies to these families.

There will be so much repairing and building fence so we wanted to provide information with this monumental task. We received some valuable information from CHS reminding us about calling "811" BEFORE making any fence repairs and especially digging.

The last thing the community needs is more tragedy or loss of life of those doing the work or volunteering to do clean up. Often pipeline markers are the last line of defense to remind those working and living in the area of the dangers underground. But with the trauma of losing cattle or property, many may forget there are underground utilities that create additional hazards to them if not using 811. You can contact 811 by phone or online, 2-3 days prior to digging, which can save you and utility owners. Any moving of dirt on your property should be preceded by a call to 811, even if you believe no utilities exist in the dig area.

Hydraulic and mechanized fencing companies have sped up the process and changed the way it was done in the past. Miles of fence can be put up in a day!!!! Since utility depth can change over time due to erosion, previous digging projects and uneven surfaces, the danger is high that a strike might occur, and it could be catastrophic.

Many farmers and ranchers know their land and what has been buried in the past, although land does change hands and those who do not own the land, such as tenants, often participate in earth moving activities every day. Ground conditions can change over the years, so pipelines and cables might not be exactly where you remember them, and underground utilities can be located 12 inches or less below the surface. Never assume the location or depth of underground utilities. Contacting 811 is a quick, safe solution to make sure the location of the utility is marked to minimize the risk for you or the utility.

When the utility company marks the area, the “marks” indicate the approximate, not exact, location of the line. Hand dig carefully around the marks until you have safely exposed the pipe or cable. If you do impact the utility, contact the utility company immediately so they can inspect it. Even if there is no obvious damage, the utility owner will want to inspect it before it is reburied because even small dents can turn into a big problem over time.

We also know individuals will be called upon from outside the area to assist, who may not have basic recall of the underground utilities in the area as well and without signs being present due to fire this may cause them to just assume nothing is there.

We know this will be an ongoing process of clean-up for some time so please pass this information onto your family, friends and neighbors.

If you have further questions on agricultural emergency management guidelines, contact us at any Post Rock Extension District Office in Beloit, Lincoln, Mankato, Osborne or Smith Center.

*Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Sandra may be contacted at [swick@ksu.edu](mailto:swick@ksu.edu) or by calling Smith Center, 282-6823, Beloit 738-3597, Lincoln 524-4432, Mankato 378-3174, or Osborne 346-2521. Join us on Facebook at “Post Rock Extension” along with our Quick Friday Facts. Also remember our website is [www.postrock.ksu.edu](http://www.postrock.ksu.edu) and my twitter account is @PRDcrops.*