



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **PSC Orders J&M Electric to Pay \$150,000 Forfeiture for Gas Pipeline Safety Violation**

*De Pere company also required to pay \$15,000 surcharge and attend education class*

MADISON – On Thursday, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) determined that J&M Electric in De Pere, Wisconsin violated several provisions of Wisconsin’s “One Call” law and ordered the company to pay a \$150,000 forfeiture, and a \$15,000 surcharge. The PSC also ordered J&M Electric and anyone performing excavator or planner responsibilities for the business to attend an education course about the state’s “One Call” laws and safe digging prior to any future excavation operations.

“One of the cases before us today was exactly the kind of alarming scenario the law is supposed to prevent. It is clear that there is work to be done to strengthen the ‘One Call’ law to dissuade excavators from ignoring it,” said Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the PSC. “I hope today’s action will get the attention of all involved in the practice of excavation. The PSC will continue to exercise its judgment and enforce the law. It is a vital matter of public safety.”

On August 27, 2019, J&M Electric, while excavating a building site in Sturgeon Bay, struck a pressurized natural gas service pipeline serving an adjacent residential property. The excavation tore through a section of the pressurized pipe. J&M Electric patched the supply side of the pipe with a plug, hose clamp, and tape. The company then backfilled the excavation, thereby burying any indication of the damaged pressurized pipe, and left the site. Despite the potential threat to life and property, J&M Electric neglected to call 911, and did not notify the pipe’s utility owner, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, of the damage and potentially life-threatening situation.

The PSC found that through J&M Electric’s actions and inactions, six violations of Wisconsin’s “One Call” law occurred and subsequently ordered the maximum forfeiture of \$25,000 for each violation. J&M Electric is also required to pay a 10% surcharge to the state’s “One Call” system and attend an educational course. Documents for this case can be found under docket 9300-PLI-108 on the PSC’s website at <https://psc.wi.gov/>.

“Safety is at the forefront of the PSC’s mission, and today’s decision shows we take that responsibility very seriously,” said Commissioner Tyler Huebner. “I hope our action can serve as a reminder to everyone looking to conduct excavation projects in Wisconsin to call Diggers Hotline and ensure the safety of their neighbors and our utility workers.”

Additionally, the PSC approved a consent agreement in docket 9300-PLI-110. Rod's Digging of Grantsburg shall pay a \$7,500 forfeiture to the state and a \$750 surcharge to Diggers Hotline for its role in an October 2019 natural gas pipeline strike that ignited and caused significant property damage.

Wisconsin law requires excavators to call Digger's Hotline three days prior to digging so that underground utilities can be properly identified and marked. [As Governor Tony Evers proclaimed the month of April as Safe Digging Month](#), the PSC reminds everyone to dial 811 at least 72 hours before digging, to have the locations of utility services properly marked. This prevents damage to life, property, and utility services. For more information about digging safely in Wisconsin, visit the [PSC website](#) or go to [diggershotline.com](#).

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