

FHH Telecom Law April 2005

Drillers, Tillers: Call 811

*By: Alicia A. Staples, Paralegal
703-812-0425
staples@fhhlaw.com*

The FCC has designated phone number "811" for giving prior notice of excavation operations to owners of underground facilities. The new rules are an effort to comply with the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002.

Calls to 811 will be routed to a One Call Center, which will inform utility owners or operators in the affected area that contractors plan to excavate nearby. Many accidents in the past have caused damage to underground pipelines because contractors did not provide notice prior to digging. The FCC hopes the 811 number will cut down on these costly and inconvenient incidents.

Of the eight possible "N11" codes, 211 through 911, the FCC had previously assigned five: 211 for information and referral services; 311 for non-emergency police; 511 for travel and information services; 711 for telephone relay services for the hearing impaired; and 911 for emergencies. 411 and 611 are widely used by carriers for directory assistance and support services, respectively, but without the blessing of the FCC.