



Presentation Guide



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Learning Objectives

1. **Know What's Underground** — Define what a utility is and recognize that utility lines for electricity, gas, water, internet, and sewer are buried underground, sometimes just inches below the surface.
2. **Read the Flags** — Identify the five utility marker flag colors and match each one to the underground utility it represents.
3. **Understand the Risks** — Explain what can happen when someone digs without checking first, including loss of services, costly fines, and the potential for serious injury or death.
4. **Know the JULIE Process** — Describe what JULIE and 811 are, how to contact them (by calling 811 or visiting JulieBeforeYouDig.com), and apply the C.A.R.E. framework for safe digging.
5. **Spread the Word** — Feel confident sharing what they learned with their parents or guardians and reminding their family to always call 811 before any digging project at home.

PowerPoint Speaking Notes

(Estimated time: 30 minutes with activities / 15 minutes without)

These speaking notes correspond to the slide numbers in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

1. Hi everyone! My name is _____ and I am so excited to be here today to talk to you about something really cool — and really important. It's called underground utility safety. Now, I know that might sound like a mouthful, but I promise by the end of our time together, you are going to know something that most adults don't even think about. And you might even be able to teach your parents something new when you go home today!

2. Let me start with a question. Does anyone know what a utility is?

Allow students to answer. Accept all responses enthusiastically — there are no wrong answers here!

Those are great ideas! Let's connect it to your everyday life, because you are actually using utilities all the time without even thinking about it.

CLICK

Raise your hand if you've watched Netflix, YouTube, or streamed anything lately. What do you think makes that possible?

You need electricity to power your TV or tablet, and you need an internet or fiber optic cable to get the signal to your house. Those are utilities!

CLICK

What about cooking dinner?

If your family has a gas stove or oven, natural gas is flowing through a pipeline right to your kitchen. That's a utility too!

CLICK

And when you wash your hands, take a

shower, or flush the toilet — where does the water come from, and where does it go?

Water lines bring clean water in, and sewer lines carry the used water away. Yep — more utilities!

Allow students to respond to each example. Keep it interactive and fun.

So a utility is basically any service — electricity, gas, water, internet, phone — that gets delivered to your home through underground cables, pipes, or wires. Pretty much everything that makes life comfortable and fun depends on these systems. Pretty important stuff, right?

3. Here is the part that surprises almost everyone. All of those cables and pipes we just talked about? Most of them are buried underground. And not super deep, either — sometimes they are only a few inches below the surface. That means your backyard, the park down the street, even the school playground might have utility lines running right below your feet at this very moment!

Because they can be so close to the surface, even a small digging project — like planting a flower or putting up a fence post — can accidentally hit one of those lines. That is why it is so important to know what's below before any digging starts.

4. Has anyone ever noticed small colored flags stuck in the ground — maybe in your yard, or at a neighbor's house, or near a construction site? Do you know what they are for?

Allow students to respond. Hold up physical marker flags if you have them — kids love

seeing the real thing!

CLICK

Those are called utility marker flags! When someone is planning to dig, trained

professionals called locators come out and place these flags in the ground to show exactly where the underground utility lines are. That way, anyone doing the digging knows right where to be careful and where not to dig.

And every color means something different. Here is a fun way to remember them:

CLICK

White – Where you plan to dig

CLICK

Blue – Water

CLICK

Purple – Reclaimed water

CLICK

Red – Electricity

CLICK

Pink – Temporary marking

CLICK

Yellow – Gas

CLICK

Green – Sewer

CLICK

Orange – Telephone & Internet

So if you ever see these flags in your yard or anywhere near a work site, leave them right where they are! They are doing an important job, and moving them could cause a really dangerous problem for whoever is digging nearby.

5. Okay, let's play a little game. I want you to think about your own house and yard. What are some projects that your parents or family might do that would involve digging in the ground?

Allow students to answer the open-ended question and celebrate their responses!

Possible answers: planting a tree, putting up a fence, starting a vegetable garden, installing a mailbox, putting up a basketball hoop, adding a sprinkler system, laying a patio.

Awesome examples! Here is something that surprises most people — it is not just big construction crews with giant machines that need to worry about underground utilities. Even digging with a regular hand shovel in your own backyard counts. If a line is only a few inches underground, a shovel is absolutely enough to hit it. So every single digging project, big or small, needs a locate first.

Here are some examples:

CLICK

Putting in a new fence

CLICK

Planting a garden

CLICK

Planting a tree

CLICK

Putting in a new mailbox

6. Alright, here's a big question. What do you think would happen if someone was digging and accidentally broke one of those underground utility lines?

Allow students to answer and react to their guesses before sharing examples. This is a great moment to let the conversation get a little dramatic!

Possible answers: the lights could go out, water could stop working, gas could leak, there could be a fire, the internet could go down.

You all are on the right track! Those are all great answers. This this picture we see an orange telephone & internet line being hit. Lets see what could happen...

7. Here is the reality:

If someone hits an internet/TV line, it could knock out service for a whole neighborhood.

CLICK

No internet.

CLICK

No TV.

CLICK

No fun.

Additionally,

If someone hits a water line, the whole neighborhood might be without clean water for hours — or even days. No drinking water, no showers, no flushing toilets!

If someone hits a gas line, it can cause a dangerous leak — and families might have to leave their homes until it is fixed.

If someone hits an electric line with a metal shovel... that could cause a very serious electric shock. Not good at all.

And on top of all of that, the utility company can send a bill to the person who did the digging for the full cost of all the repairs — and that can be thousands and thousands of dollars, even if it was a total accident.

8. The great news is that every single one of those situations is completely avoidable. That is exactly where JULIE and 811 come

in!

So what is JULIE, and why does 811 matter so much?

JULIE stands for Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators. That is a big fancy name, but here is what it really means: JULIE is the friendly, free service in Illinois that makes sure nobody accidentally digs into an underground utility line.

CLICK

When you — or your parents — call 811 or go online to JulieBeforeYouDig.com before any digging project,

CLICK

JULIE gets in touch with all the utility companies in your area.

CLICK

Each company then sends out their own trained locator to visit your property and mark where their lines are.

CLICK

Then you practice safe digging.

And the best part? The whole thing is completely free. The call is free. The locators coming out are free. The markings are free. All of it!

9. There are actually two easy ways to get started with JULIE.

CLICK

You can call 811 — it connects you right to a friendly JULIE agent who is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CLICK

Or you can go online to JulieBeforeYouDig.com and fill out a quick form to submit your request. Either way works great!

CLICK

Before you reach out, it helps to have a little plan ready. Think about things like:

CLICK

Why are you digging, and what is the project?

CLICK

Exactly where on the property will the digging happen?

CLICK

Who is going to be doing the digging and what tools will they use?

CLICK

And when do you want to start? In Illinois, you need to contact JULIE at least 3 full business days before any digging begins — so plan ahead!

Once you have those answers, make the call or click submit. JULIE takes it from there!

10. After you contact JULIE, the utility companies send out their locators. A locator is a trained professional whose whole job is to visit your property, figure out exactly where their company's underground lines are, and mark them with those colored flags and paint we talked about. They are kind of like underground detectives!

CLICK

CLICK

Speaking of those flags — let's see how well you remember your colors! I'll give you a color and you tell me what's underground. Ready?

11. Do you remember what green means?

CLICK

Green means sewer

12. What does orange mean?

CLICK

Orange means telephone and internet

13. What does red mean?

CLICK

Red means electricity

14. What does yellow mean?

CLICK

Yellow means gas

15. What does white mean?

CLICK

White shows where you plan to dig

16. Once you have contacted JULIE, there is one more important step before anyone picks up a shovel: you have to wait.

CLICK

Illinois law says you must wait at least 3 full business days after your request before any digging starts. This gives every utility company enough time to send their locator out and get everything properly marked.

It might be tempting to just get started — especially if it's a fun project like planting a garden or putting up a basketball hoop. But rushing past this step is exactly how accidents happen. Good things come to those who wait, and in this case, waiting keeps everyone safe!

17. Before anyone breaks ground, log back in to JulieBeforeYouDig.com or check your 811 ticket to make sure you have received a response from all of the utility companies

and that everything is marked and ready to go. This is called getting the all clear. If something does not look right, or a utility has not yet responded, give JULIE a call before you do anything else. Better safe than sorry!

18. Alright — you’ve made your plan, you’ve contacted JULIE, you’ve waited, and you’ve got the all clear. You are ready to dig! Just remember to always do it with C.A.R.E.:

CLICK

C – Call or click before you dig. Every single time, no exceptions. It is the most important step of all!

CLICK

A – Allow required time for marking. Give it the full 3 business days. Every line needs to be marked before the first shovel goes in.

CLICK

R – Respect the marks. Those flags and painted lines are protecting people. Never

move them, kick them over, or ignore them — they are doing an important job!

CLICK

E – Excavate carefully. When you are digging near marked areas, use hand tools first to find the exact location of the lines before switching to any power equipment.

19. So the next time your parents are talking about a project in the yard — planting a tree, putting in a garden, building a fence — you can be the one who reminds them: “Hey, did you call 811?” You might just be the smartest person in the room!

Thank you so much for being such a great audience today. You have learned something really important, and I hope you share it with your families. Remember — 811 and JulieBeforeYouDig.com, always before you dig!



Abbreviated Speaking Guide

For use with no AV or shortened time frame

Estimated time: 10 min (without activities) | 20 min (with activities)

The following guide can be used to lead a discussion about underground utility safety in a shorter time frame or without audio/visual equipment. For best results, relate the utilities to things students use and care about every day — their favorite shows, video games, warm showers, and home-cooked meals. The goal is to make this feel like a fun and interesting conversation, not a lecture. Adjust your examples to fit the age group you are presenting to.

Hi everyone! My name is _____ and I am so excited to be here today to talk to you about something really cool — and really important. It's called underground utility safety. Now, I know that might sound like a mouthful, but I promise by the end of our time together, you are going to know something that most adults don't even think about. And you might even be able to teach your parents something new when you go home today!

So first — what is a utility?

Let me start with a question. Does anyone know what a utility is?

Allow students to answer. Accept all responses enthusiastically — there are no wrong answers here!

Those are great ideas! Let's connect it to your everyday life, because you are actually using utilities all the time without even thinking about it.

Raise your hand if you've watched Netflix, YouTube, or streamed anything lately. What do you think makes that possible?

You need electricity to power your TV or tablet, and you need an internet or fiber optic cable to get the signal to your house. Those are utilities!

What about cooking dinner? If your family

has a gas stove or oven, natural gas is flowing through a pipeline right to your kitchen. That's a utility too!

And when you wash your hands, take a shower, or flush the toilet — where does the water come from, and where does it go?

Water lines bring clean water in, and sewer lines carry the used water away. Yep — more utilities!

Allow students to respond to each example. Keep it interactive and fun.

So a utility is basically any service — electricity, gas, water, internet, phone — that gets delivered to your home through underground cables, pipes, or wires. Pretty much everything that makes life comfortable and fun depends on these systems. Pretty important stuff, right?

These utilities are buried underground — sometimes really close to the surface!

Here is the part that surprises almost everyone. All of those cables and pipes we just talked about? Most of them are buried underground. And not super deep, either — sometimes they are only a few inches below the surface. That means your backyard, the park down the street, even the school playground might have utility lines running right below your feet at this very moment!

Because they can be so close to the surface, even a small digging project — like planting a flower or putting up a fence post — can accidentally hit one of those lines. That is why it is so important to know what's below before any digging starts.

Have you ever seen these colorful flags?

Has anyone ever noticed small colored flags stuck in the ground — maybe in your yard, or at a neighbor's house, or near a construction site? Do you know what they are for?

Allow students to respond. Hold up physical marker flags if you have them — kids love seeing the real thing!

Those are called utility marker flags! When someone is planning to dig, trained professionals called locators come out and place these flags in the ground to show exactly where the underground utility lines are. That way, anyone doing the digging knows right where to be careful and where not to dig.

And every color means something different. Here is a fun way to remember them:

- Red – Electric power lines
- Yellow – Natural gas and petroleum pipelines
- Orange – Phone, TV, internet, and fiber optics
- Blue – Water
- Green – Sewers and drain lines

So if you ever see these flags in your yard or anywhere near a work site, leave them right where they are! They are doing an important job, and moving them could cause a really dangerous problem for whoever is digging nearby.

Play the Marker Flag Game here if time permits — see Sample Activities!

What are some projects around the house that might need digging?

Okay, let's play a little game. I want you to think about your own house and yard. What are some projects that your parents or family might do that would involve digging in the ground?

Allow students to answer the open-ended question and celebrate their responses!

Possible answers: planting a tree, putting up a fence, starting a vegetable garden, installing a mailbox, putting up a basketball hoop, adding a sprinkler system, laying a patio.

Awesome examples! Here is something that surprises most people — it is not just big construction crews with giant machines that need to worry about underground utilities. Even digging with a regular hand shovel in your own backyard counts. If a line is only a few inches underground, a shovel is absolutely enough to hit it. So every single digging project, big or small, needs a locate first.

What do you think would happen if someone accidentally broke one of those lines?

Alright, here's a big question. What do you think would happen if someone was digging and accidentally broke one of those underground utility lines?

Allow students to answer and react to their guesses before sharing examples. This is a great moment to let the conversation get a little dramatic!

Possible answers: the lights could go out, water could stop working, gas could leak, there could be a fire, the internet could go down.

You all are on the right track! Here is the reality:

- If someone hits a water line, the whole neighborhood might be without clean water for hours — or even days. No

drinking water, no showers, no flushing toilets!

- If someone hits a gas line, it can cause a dangerous leak — and families might have to leave their homes until it is fixed.
- If someone hits an electric line with a metal shovel... that could cause a very serious electric shock. Not good at all.
- And on top of all of that, the utility company can send a bill to the person who did the digging for the full cost of all the repairs — and that can be thousands and thousands of dollars, even if it was a total accident.

The great news is that every single one of those situations is completely avoidable. That is exactly where JULIE and 811 come in!

So what is JULIE, and why does 811 matter so much?

JULIE stands for Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators. That is a big fancy name, but here is what it really means: JULIE is the friendly, free service in Illinois that makes sure nobody accidentally digs into an underground utility line. When you — or your parents — call 811 or go online to JulieBeforeYouDig.com before any digging project, JULIE gets in touch with all the utility companies in your area. Each company then sends out their own trained locator to visit your property and mark where their lines are. And the best part? The whole thing is completely free. The call is free. The locators coming out are free. The markings are free. All of it!

You can call — or you can click!

There are actually two easy ways to get started with JULIE. You can call 811 — it connects you right to a friendly JULIE agent who is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or you can go online to JulieBeforeYouDig.com and fill out a quick form to submit your request. Either way works great!

Before you reach out, it helps to have a little plan ready. Think about things like: Why are you digging, and what is the project? Exactly where on the property will the digging happen? Who is going to be doing the digging and what tools will they use? And when do you want to start? In Illinois, you need to contact JULIE at least 3 full business days before any digging begins — so plan ahead!

Once you have those answers, make the call or click submit. JULIE takes it from there!

Meet the locators — and let's do a quick quiz!

After you contact JULIE, the utility companies send out their locators. A locator is a trained professional whose whole job is to visit your property, figure out exactly where their company's underground lines are, and mark them with those colored flags and paint we talked about. They are kind of like underground detectives!

Speaking of those flags — let's see how well you remember your colors! I'll give you a color and you tell me what's underground. Ready?

Hold up flags or call out colors one at a time. Make it energetic and fun — cheer for correct answers!

- *Red? (Electric power lines!)*
- *Yellow? (Gas and petroleum pipelines!)*
- *Orange? (Phone, internet, TV, and fiber optics!)*
- *Blue? (Water!)*
- *Green? (Sewers and drains!)*

Fantastic! You are practically experts already.

Wait the required time — patience is key!

Once you have contacted JULIE, there is one more important step before anyone picks up a shovel: you have to wait. Illinois

laws says you must wait at least 3 full business days after your request before any digging starts. This gives every utility company enough time to send their locator out and get everything properly marked.

It might be tempting to just get started — especially if it's a fun project like planting a garden or putting up a basketball hoop. But rushing past this step is exactly how accidents happen. Good things come to those who wait, and in this case, waiting keeps everyone safe!

Check the response and get the all clear

Before anyone breaks ground, log back in to JulieBeforeYouDig.com or check your 811 ticket to make sure you have received a response from all of the utility companies and that everything is marked and ready to go. This is called getting the all clear. If something does not look right, or a utility has not yet responded, give JULIE a call before you do anything else. Better safe than sorry!

Now you're ready to dig — with C.A.R.E.!

Alright — you've made your plan, you've contacted JULIE, you've waited, and you've got the all clear. You are ready to dig! Just remember to always do it with C.A.R.E.:

C – Call or click before you dig. Every single time, no exceptions. It is the most important step of all!

A – Allow required time for marking. Give it the full 3 business days. Every line needs to be marked before the first shovel goes in.

R – Respect the marks. Those flags and painted lines are protecting people. Never move them, kick them over, or ignore them — they are doing an important job!

E – Excavate carefully. When you are digging near marked areas, use hand tools

first to find the exact location of the lines before switching to any power equipment. So the next time your parents are talking about a project in the yard — planting a tree, putting in a garden, building a fence — you can be the one who reminds them: “Hey, did you call 811?” You might just be the smartest person in the room!

Thank you so much for being such a great audience today. You have learned something really important, and I hope you share it with your families. Remember — 811 and JulieBeforeYouDig.com, always before you dig!



Sample Activities

1. Marker Flag Game

Teach the students which utility each flag color represents, then test their knowledge with rapid-fire prompts. This works great right after Slide 6 or during the flag quiz on Slide 11.

Setup: Hand out one flag to each student, or have them pair up if you do not have enough flags. Review the colors together before beginning.

Instructions: Tell students to raise the correct flag as fast as they can after each prompt. Use these or create your own:

“You use me to read at night.” Red

“You use me to heat your home and cook your food.” Yellow (and Red)

“You use me to stream videos and play games online.” Orange (and Red)

“You use me to wash your hands.” Blue and Green

“You use me to flush the toilet.” Blue and Green

“You use me to water the garden.” Blue

“You use me to talk to grandma on the phone.” Orange

Tip: Award small prizes like stickers or pencils to the fastest correct answers to keep the energy up!

2. Would You Call? — Scenario Game

Read out a household scenario and ask students to vote: would your parents need to call 811 before doing this? Students can give a thumbs up for yes and thumbs down for no.

Hanging a picture on the wall inside. No

Planting a flower pot on the front porch. No

Planting a tree in the backyard. Yes

Installing a mailbox with a post. Yes

Building a backyard fence. Yes

Putting up a basketball hoop with a ground sleeve. Yes

Raking leaves in the yard. No

Putting garden stakes in the ground. Yes — if driven more than a couple of inches deep.

This activity reinforces that calling 811 applies to any digging project that goes into the ground — not just big construction jobs. It is especially effective for dispelling the common misconception that only large machinery requires a locate.

3. What Would Happen? — Consequence Brainstorm

Write each flag color on the board. Have students come up with three to five ways their daily life would be disrupted if that utility were accidentally damaged. Encourage them to think creatively.

Example for Yellow (Gas): no heat, no hot water, no cooking, possible fire or explosion risk, family might need to leave home.

Example for Orange (Internet): no streaming, no gaming, no school wi-fi, delayed communication.

Discuss as a group: Which damage would be the most dangerous? Which would be the most disruptive? Which do students think happens most often? This is a great critical thinking exercise that also reinforces the real-world stakes of safe digging.

4. Take-Home Booklets

Distribute take-home booklets at the end of the session for students to bring home to their families. The booklet reinforces the key messages from today's presentation and includes the 811 number and JulieBeforeYouDig.com web address so parents can learn about requesting a locate before their next digging project.

