



Safe Excavation – Avoiding Underground Utility Damage

There are an estimated 20 million miles of buried utilities beneath the surface of the ground in the United States that are a vital part of our daily lives. Striking an underground utility line including electricity, natural gas, communications, sewer or water means potential injury, work delays, extra costs and ultimately, an insurance claim. The utility will almost certainly make a claim to recover its repair costs, charges that sometimes total \$10,000 or more. Therefore, it is important to follow best practices when excavating.

Best Practices

- As required, notify local, county or state government of any plans to dig
- Available free service would be to call 811 from anywhere in the country a few days prior to digging. 811 will route your call to your local One-Call Center. Many states now accept requests online
- **ALWAYS** call your state's One-Call system for a mark out. Even if you are an irrigation contractor and you only anticipate working 18 inches or less into the ground, get the mark out done
- Never rely on another contractor's existing mark out. It may be outdated, flags may have been moved, or sprayed markings may have washed away
- Most states require each excavator to request its own separate mark out. Even if several other contractors are calling for a mark out at the same time, protect yourself by calling for your own
- Always retain a printout of your mark out requests
- Wait the required amount of time before digging. Never commence digging until the mark out is completed
- Carefully follow all requirements to hand dig in work areas located close to mark outs. Contractors who use equipment too close to mark outs inevitably damage utility lines
- Train all employees so they understand what the different color mark outs mean and to work in such areas, including how to properly hand dig

If a Line is Damaged

- Immediately contact the utility and, if necessary, emergency response authorities
- If it is safe to do so, take photos to show what was damaged, whether the mark out was correct, and how deep the line was buried. Note whether any other contractors were involved
- If you are still on-site during the repairs, note how many utility workers and trucks are there and how long the repairs take to complete. This information helps determine how much repairs should cost
- Call the claim into American National Insurance Company (800) 333-2860 or contact your local agent. While the utility may take months to submit the claim, it can be extremely helpful to get the photos and information from you early in the process



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