



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Throughout the United States, there are perhaps millions (if not billions) of underground utilities, some as close to the surface as a few inches, while others are ten to twenty feet below the surface.

Unfortunately, many of these underground utilities are dug up when a contractor is attempting to bury "new" utilities, sometimes actually disrupting fiber optic lines that transmit data around the world or worse, workers are killed.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Most states have a **ONE-CALL CENTER**, a quasi-public state agency, that serves as a statewide clearinghouse for utility owners (C&P, AT&T, State Governments, Federal Agencies, etc.)

The **ONE-CALL CENTERS** have maps of almost all underground utility systems, and can plot locations to be visited by their "locate teams," who come on-site and physically mark the utility's estimated location (with various colors denoting what "type" of utility is being located).

ONE-CALL STEPS

1. You **call the notification** (one-call) center...
2. Notification (one-call) **center informs** all member utilities in the area...
3. Member **utilities mark their lines**...
4. You **wait 48 hours** and call the TIE SYSTEM (Ticket Information Exchange) to check the status of utility lines. If all marked or clear, you may commence with excavation...
5. Or you **may wait 72 hours** before commencing excavation...
6. However, if you **see clear evidence of unmarked utility** lines...
7. **Call back** to the notification center for your area and report. Then wait 3 hours for the utility operator(s) to mark those line(s)...
8. Always respect the marks and flags. **Take all reasonable actions** to properly protect, support and backfill underground utility lines.
9. Immediately notify the utility if a damage, dislocation or **disturbance of an underground utility** line occurs.
10. If damage creates an emergency, **take immediate steps** to safeguard life, health and property.

COLOR CODES FOR MARKING

Universal color coding is used by all One-Call Centers throughout the United States, so that the industry can *readily identify the type of underground utility* being located by the “markings” on the ground:

- WHITE Proposed Excavation
- PINK Temporary Survey Marking
- RED Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit
- YELLOW Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum, Gaseous Material
- ORANGE Communications, Alarms or Signal Lines
- BLUE Potable Water
- PURPLE Reclaimed Water, Irrigation & Slurry Lines
- GREEN Sewers and Drain Lines

Note that the color-coding system used by one-Call Centers was designed by the *American Public Works Association (APWA)*.

The PINK (Temporary Survey Markings) code, and the PURPLE (Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines) code were adopted more recently.

HAND-DIGGING

Once an underground utility has been located (horizontal location, not vertical location), most One-Call Centers require the contractor to “hand-dig” until the utility has been physically located (you can see it).

The art of utility locating results from common sense, experience, and following time-honored procedures, as well as the judgment and direction of the jobsite “competent person.”

DISASTERS/CATASTROPHES/DEATHS

What oftentimes happens when an excavator “*hits*” an *underground gas line*? In many cases, a fire/explosion results, often engulfing the excavator equipment, and the operator, who dies an agonizing death.

If a 10K electric line is hit, electrocution of the equipment operator usually follows. When communication lines are disrupted, its possible that National Defense Agencies throughout the country are disrupted for days.

Almost weekly, throughout the country, a utility line of some type is hit, with explosions oftentimes following...and also one or more fatalities. How can this be avoided? By following statewide and nationwide One-Call Codes. Remember the acronym: CARE:

Call before You Dig
Allow the required time for marking
Respect and protect the marks/flags
Excavate with care