

 TOOLBOX TALK # 999 Date : July 20, 2020

**Underground Utility Strikes**

Underground utility strikes are a dangerous and costly event. Almost all line strikes are expensive and many of incidents that damage gas or electric lines can be extremely dangerous to everyone in the area. According to the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), over the past 20 years utility hits have resulted in $1.7 billion in property damage, 1,906 injuries, and 421 deaths.

**Excavation Best Practices to Avoid Utility Line Strikes**

* [Always call 811](http://call811.com/) to have lines properly marked two to three days prior to digging, even at home. 811 notifies utility owners of your plans to dig and allows them to have someone come out and mark any utilities in that area. After utility locators have come out and you have confirmed all affected utility owners have responded to your request you are able to dig.
* Do not dig with machinery or pointed tools within the “tolerance zone” around marked utilities. Each state has requirements for excavating within a tolerance zone which is comprised of the width of the facility plus 18’’ on either side of the outside edge of the underground facility on a horizontal plane. Some states may require a larger tolerance zone. Use “soft digging techniques” such as hand digging with blunt edged tools or vacuum excavation.
* Stop excavation and call 811 again if unmarked utilities are discovered or utilities are not found where they are marked.
* When working in a facility or on private property that has a lot of lines installed by a private company the lines most likely will not be part of the 811 system. Use other methods such as ground penetrating radar, private locators, as-built drawings, and individuals with experience with the facility to locate potential lines before excavating.

There are many hazards to be considered when excavating, underground utilities being one of the major hazards. Having a proactive well-thought out approach prior to digging is important in order to avoid underground utility strikes. Procedures need to be in place for when issues arise during excavation or a utility line is damaged. There are many other hazards and best practices not mentioned here.

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**YOUR SIGNATURE ON THE REVERSE SIDE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT!**

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Phone 614-473-1050 Fax 614-473-1359 email: BTipton@IECCentralOH.org website: [www.IECCentralOH.org](http://www.IECCentraloh.org)



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 TOOLBOX TALKS # 999 –Underground Utility Strikes

My signature below indicates that I read and understand Toolbox Talk: “Underground Utility Strikes”

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