

# Tool Box Talk

# UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

DECEMBER 2013

Water, heating and electrical are all services we take for granted until a disruption of those services occurs. The majority of these disruptions are planned for as these systems require ongoing maintenance, upgrading or inspection, however, in many cases these interruptions are a result of an accidental strike, which is directly related to the lack of pre planning.

The conduit, cable and piping grid work involved in delivering these services is located underground and is typically out of site, out of mind. Striking one of these systems without considering the consequences can be costly, not only financially but physically as well. Contact with an underground facility can potentially cause:

## Injury to Yourself and Others

- Electrocution, explosions & high pressure releases

## Severe Damage

- Isolation of entire communities & disruption of vital communications networks including emergency services

## Financial Penalties

- Expenses associated with repairs, legal costs due to prosecution or litigation & fines for violations of provincial legislation

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations require that prior to commencing work on an excavation, trench, tunnel, excavated shaft, borehole and where breaking ground with any equipment to a depth that may contact underground utilities, employers and contractors are to establish the location of underground pipelines, cables and conduits and that their locations are to be conspicuously marked. If the operation involves the disturbance of soil within 600mm of an existing pipeline, cable or conduit, the employer or contractor shall ensure that the area must be exposed by hand or other approved method before excavation begins in that area. The exposed pipeline, cable or conduit must be supported to prevent any damage during backfilling and any subsequent settlement of the ground.

In Saskatchewan, Sask 1st Call is a free service that provides underground utility screening and notifications for more than 40 utility and subscriber companies throughout the province. To provide optimum levels of diligence towards preventing damage to underground infrastructure, review Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA) Excavation Best Practices at [www.scga.ca](http://www.scga.ca) (section 4.0 of SCGA Best Practices).

In the event of contact or damage to an underground pipeline, cable or conduit, OHS requires that an employer, contractor shall immediately notify the owner of the pipeline that contact or damage has occurred to, and take steps to protect the health and safety of any worker who may be at risk due to the unsafe condition resulting from the contact or damage.



Request a free line locate from all major utilities and subscribers quickly and easily through Sask 1st Call

Working safely around these underground services is vital to the workers, customers and companies providing those services. By doing so we not only guarantee the safe continued delivery of these services, but that we all can come home at the end of the day to enjoy them.

The following color designations are provided by the International color code marking for buried facilities:

- **White** - Proposed excavation
- **Yellow** - Gas, oil, petroleum, gaseous materials
- **Orange** - Telephone, cable TV, communication, alarm, signal lines
- **Red** - Electric power lines, cable conduit, lighting cables
- **Blue** - Potable water
- **Green** - Sanitary sewers, storm sewers, drain lines
- **Purple** - Reclaimed water, irrigation, slurry lines
- **Pink** - Temporary survey markings



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