

DIG SAFE POLICY

Dig Safe is a private company that provides excavation notifications to its member utilities. Not all utilities are members.

State law requires an excavator to call Dig Safe for most excavation activities. Exceptions are described in the laws and vary from state to state. ECI's policy is to call in the Dig Safe for all excavations. Exceptions, where allowed by the law, need to be approved by the ECI Safety Officer or Ken or Scott Pidgeon.

Premark Site

State law requires the contractor to premark the excavation area prior to calling Dig Safe. The VT state law provides exceptions for linear projects exceeding 500 feet and for sites that can be adequately described in simple terms. However, as a minimum, we need to premark the site with the words "ECI Dig Safe" to indicate to the utility that they are reviewing and marking out the proper site.

Dig Safe Call

The project manager or his field superintendent should personally call in the Dig Safe, at least 2 business days (for VT) prior to the start of excavation.

The call needs to be documented on the ECI Digsafe Form (Attached), which is to be submitted to the ECI receptionist for filing (original in Dig Safe Binder, one in project file, one in PM's mail box, one copy for the field). All Dig Safe fax responses are to be appended to the original Dig Safe Form in the Dig Safe Binder by the receptionist.

Dig Safe notification can also be done on-line. However, there are some limitations and it takes an additional day.

GPS Coordinates

Some locations are best defined by GPS coordinates. The coordinates need to be converted to a degree decimal format to the .0001 accuracy. For example, the Google Earth coordinate for the ECI Office is:

44°27'24.66"N 73°07'58.95"W

The Dig Safe GPS format is:

Latitude 44.4569 Longitude -73.1330

No other GPS format will be accepted by the Dig Safe Operator.

Additional Notifications & Precautions

Additional notifications are frequently required to completely mark out the existing utilities, as described below:

1. The utility is not obligated to mark out the private “service” side of the utility. Notify the owner of the service, if applicable.
2. Not all utilities are members of Dig Safe. For example, municipal water and sewer departments and private utility owners, which need to be called separately by ECI.
3. Railroads are not typically members of Dig Safe. During excavations around the railroad, the signal maintainer should be contacted to mark out the railroad signal wires.
4. Work within the VAOT rights-of-way will require some type of excavation or entry permit. Work with the applicable agency during that process to locate any of their existing utilities, such as highway signal control wires and drainage structures. Similar considerations are necessary for local city and town highway rights-of-way.
5. Parking lot lighting wires are almost never marked by an official Dig Safe. Be aware of the potential for these lines on any site and have them marked out by ECI’s Utility Locator.

Pre-Construction

ECI Marking

In some situations, ECI may need to call in its own Utility Locators (or a utility locating contractor) to mark out private service lines or verify that the excavation area is clear of unmarked/unknown utilities. However, ECI should not mark out utilities that are the responsibility of the utility company. If this situation is encountered, the superintendent should notify the utility company before any excavation in that area.

Photo Documentation

The Project Manager should consider documenting the Dig Safe markings with photos or video. Photos are mandatory in urban or industrial sites where unmarked or mismarked utilities are expected.

Pre-Excavation Site Meeting

Prior to starting excavation, the superintendent or foreman shall hold a tailboard meeting to discuss the following:

1. Proposed limits, methods, and objective of excavation.
2. Review of the marked utility locations and depths.
3. Verify that all expected utilities have visited the site and marked their utilities or have indicated that they have cleared the site. Do not dig where expected utilities have not obviously marked their lines or cleared the site.
4. Methods to confirm the locations and depths, such as hand excavation or vacuum potholing.
5. Assign a spotter for excavation work near the utilities. The spotter shall excavate by hand within 18 inches of the utility.

6. Assign a person to maintain the utility marks, using offsets where excavation work and frequent resurfacing occurs.
7. Evaluate the potential for unmarked utilities and proposed measures to prevent a strike. This evaluation should consider the history of the site, locations of anticipated utility services, signs of old trenches, conduit drops from poles, ground mounted transformers, site lighting fixtures, etc.

On-Site Notifications

Certain utility owners need to be on site during excavation near their lines, including Vermont Gas, AT&T, Sprint, and typically any explosive/hazardous pipeline owner. Occasionally, other utility owners with a major trunkline through the excavation will also want to be present. The superintendent shall make all the necessary contacts and notifications to accommodate these utility owners.

Dig Carefully- Safety Tips

1. Dig Safe marks have a “tolerance zone” of 18 inches on all sides of the utility plus the width of the utility. Excavation within the tolerance zones require ‘non-evasive’ methods to expose the utility prior to excavating with the cutting edge of powered equipment. Preferred methods include hand digging or vacuum excavation.
2. Use extreme caution around buried power, natural gas, and petroleum.
3. Do not pot-hole electrical power by ‘wet jet’ method.
4. A spotter is required when digging.
5. Depths and directions of underground utilities aren’t necessarily uniform.
6. Do not dig outside the Dig Safe zone. If additional excavation is required, another dig safe authorization must be obtained.
7. Excavation location can be given to Dig Safe in the form of latitude and longitude. However, the ECI caller needs to understand the format applied by the Dig Safe operator. For example, is the format degrees-minutes-seconds; degrees.0000; degrees-minutes.000, etc. ?

Utility Strike

ECI’s response to a utility strike should be consistent with “Incident Response” policy of the ECI safety manual. In general, the superintendent should stabilize the problem, attend to any injured, report the incident to the utility owner and to ECI, and support the utility owner in the repair.

Utility Demolition

Unexpected utilities discovered during excavation that require demolition or removal require the completion of an ECI Demolition Permit signed by the owner of the utility verifying and authorizing safe demolition.