











ARCO SAFE TOOL BOX TALKS

Excavation – Underground Utilities

1926 Subpart P, Excavations



Uniform Color Code for marking underground utilities

	Proposed Excavation
	Temporary Survey
	Electric
	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum
	Communication, Telephone, TV
	Potable Water
	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation
	Sewer, Drain Lines

Underneath our modern society is a spaghetti mess of water, electrical, gas, and communication lines. Without getting them marked before digging is like playing “Russian Roulette” with natural gas or propane bomb, or thousands of unrestricted volts or electricity. Thankfully avoiding such a public relation, monetary and life costing disaster is easy to avoid.

Nationwide you can now call 811 anywhere and get a locate by the utility companies within days (actual time varies by state). A locate will consist of the utility company, or their contractor, using their maps and locating equipment to then paint appropriate colors on the ground.

When digging, equipment should NEVER be used within 24” of a marked line. Maps and locating equipment are not exact, plus there is some human error in painting lines on the ground. Also a line doesn’t tell you how deep the line is buried. Landscaping can make lines less than 2” from the surface. Careful digging with hand tools can be the only authorized way of uncovering an underground utility.

Be mindful that painted lines quickly disappear under snow, in sand, or with rain. Plan digging within a timely manner after the locate.

OSHA requires that any underground installations shall be protected, supported, or even removed to protect workers. This means that lines left intact cannot be allowed to sag, or be exposed to the elements. If a line is ever damaged, even if it is just a “nick” in the insulation, it is easier to have the utility company come out and make a repair while line is uncovered instead of waiting weeks or months later when rain water contaminates potable water, shorts out electrical lines, or gas pressure lines show a drop in pressure. That can be expensive!