

Know what's below

By law you are required to contact your local utilities prior to a planned dig or excavation — this also applies when you are staking or anchoring tents. You may think that this is the responsibility of the customer, however, in the event of an accident, the responsibility goes back to the operator who is actually performing the dig or excavation to make sure that steps were taken to have the underground utilities properly marked.

Notify:

Notify your state's 811 center by calling 811 or making an online request two to three days before work begins. The 811 center will contact the impacted utility operators.

Wait:

Wait the required number of days (state specific) to allow utility operators to send out locators to mark the buried lines with paint or flags. On average, seven to 10 utility operators are notified on each request.

Confirm:

Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and located accurately.

State laws vary on the process for confirmation so check with your local 811 center. If you see clear evidence of a utility (manhole, utility box, etc.), but there are no utility marks — contact your 811 center.

Respect:

Respect the utility marks (paint or flags). The marks provided by utility operators are your guide for the duration of the project. If you are unable to maintain the marks, contact your local 811 center.

Dig carefully:

State laws generally prohibit the use of mechanized equipment within 18 to 24 in. on all sides of a marked utility, which is called the "tolerance zone." If you must dig near the marks, hand dig to expose the facility and avoid using mechanized equipment within the same tolerance zone. Always check with your state and local government agencies for specific requirements for digging near underground utility lines.

Source: Common Ground Alliance

811

Know the American Public Works Association color codes

White	Proposed evacuation
Pink	Temporary survey markings
Red	Electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables
Yellow	Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or gaseous materials
Orange	Communications, alarm or signal lines, cable or conduit
Blue	Potable water
Purple	Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines
Green	Sewers and drain lines