

# SAFETY TALK

## [underground utility locates]

Some of us have been on jobs that have come to a halt when someone hit an underground gas or electrical line. If we're lucky, no one gets hurt.

Buried gas and electrical lines present a serious risk of injury to workers who contact them accidentally.

The first step is to call the utility owner before digging.

It's the contractor's job to ask utilities to locate and mark their underground services. That includes gas, water, electrical, cable TV, telephone, and pipelines.

Utilities generally offer a free service for locating and marking buried services with labelled stakes, flags, or paint. These markings indicate the centre line of the underground service.

Utilities also provide a diagram of the locate information. Once the service has been located and marked, it's our job to uncover it. This must be done by hand-digging. Never use excavating equipment to find the service.

Once the service has been uncovered and its actual location determined at several points along its length, excavating equipment can be used in areas adjacent to the service.

If the service poses a hazard and cannot be shut off or disconnected, the utility provider may supervise the digging and excavation. The utility provider **must** be present if fibre optic cable is being uncovered.

Utility pipes, conduit, and cable exposed in a trench or excavation must be supported to keep them from failing or breaking. When construction contracts don't specify the method of support, ask the utility provider for their requirements.

Breaks in electrical, gas, water, and pipelines can threaten not only construction crews, but also the general public.

To avoid the risk of serious injuries and fatalities, always **call before digging**.

*[Instructor to review procedures for requesting locates and excavating.]*

In New Brunswick, the law regarding underground utility line or piping can be found in *General Regulation 91-191* under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, section 180.

