

Utility strike avoidance program

UFG Insurance is committed to providing assistance and resources as it relates to protecting policyholders. As part of that commitment, the following document aims to assist policyholders with preventing utility strikes. The purpose of this resource is to help establish the right level of due diligence to avoid strikes by establishing procedures, training employees and preparing for excavations.

Procedures

- Call in your local area locating resource prior to digging. Obtain and record an active open ticket for your dig area.
- Ensure all utilities have responded to the open ticket. If needed, make second and third notices.
- If no response, review with ownership/management before proceeding to organize work.
- Review all site project drawings and plans.
- Mark excavation areas for locates (as appropriate).
- Refresh locates after rainfall or other weather events that may disturb locate markings.
- If undermining is to occur, communicate with utility owner to determine support methods.

Training

Train all employees on the following:

- Utility locate colors.
- Maintaining a minimum of 18 inches from top and sides of utilities.
- Spotter duties.
- Utility potholing procedures, which are used to locate known utilities below surface level by excavating a pothole of around 8 to 12 inches in diameter and using a vacuum excavator to dig until the utility is found (if applicable).
- No digging without locates mandate.
- Documentation requirements.

Preparation for excavation

- Have a designated employee complete a walkthrough of the site with the site drawing to compare what was located versus what was mapped on the drawing.
- Document pictures of the area and locates prior to digging.
- Review site for signs of underground utilities that were not marked or refreshed.
 - (Hand holes, manholes, pedestals, old flags/marks, vaults, poles, etc.)
- Conduct an employee huddle to review the site, marked utilities, and excavation plan.
- Excavate parallel to marked utilities greater than 18" out from the locate marks.
- Utilize an excavation spotter.
- Do not set spoil piles on top of utility locates.
- Hand dig, water jet or vacuum excavate to fully expose the utility.

Post utility strike best practices

Damage to utilities includes:

1. Scuffing the outer coating of gas and electric lines.
2. Removal or penetrating outer jacket or insulation of electric and communication lines.
3. Cracking, bending or breaking conduits, regardless if service is lost.
4. Contact with overhead lines or release of gas from gas lines.

If a utility line is struck, follow the following guidelines.

- Immediately have all employees stop work and move to a safe location. Contact foreman/management.
- Call 911 if:
 - Gas line punctured.
 - Electric line damaged/sparking.
 - Water main opened.
- Do not enter excavation to attempt repair.
- Photograph damages and general project area.
- Make a hand-drawn sketch including incident area, equipment, employee locations and related damage.
- Do not share on social media or distribute photos/videos.
- Foremen/management will collect witness statements from employees and operator.
- Complete accident/incident investigation.
- Collect business cards/names/phone for contractors completing repairs.
- Document conversation with utility company responders.
- Photograph repaired area prior to backfill or covering of lines.

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