

'Reasonable Care' Can Help Avoid Costly Damages on Jobsites
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The Utility Notification Center of Colorado's "Call Before You Dig" service continues to be a critical component of mitigating damages throughout the state. According to UNCC's annual report, "the decreasing trend since 2003 in the number and severity of facility damages in Colorado is evidence that shared responsibility, mutual cooperation and precise information do make a difference."

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While the number of incidences has significantly decreased in recent years, other statistics provided by UNCC show that damages and their negative impacts are still occurring. Many contractors have been subjected to fines by utility companies or forced into litigation, even after following the proper safety procedures.

In order to avoid dangerous utility strikes and the associated fines and litigation, contractors need to go above and beyond a simple phone call when human life and profitability are at stake.

Creating a case for reasonable care can be a contractor's strongest ally against difficulties that may arise from accidents on the jobsite. We recommend that all contractors utilize a case book or log to document and hold all evidence that every precaution was taken to identify and locate the underground facilities in a specific dig area. The following is a road map to a safe excavation process.

Reasonable Care Case Requirements:

- Create your "Reasonable Care Case" log book to store ticket numbers, ticket logs to list all Tier 1 and Tier 2 members, documentation of conversations with utility owners, pothole logs, drawings/sketches and photos of actual locates—from various angles.
- Know the "One Call Law" and make the UNCC's 811 process part of your regular safety training. Test your employees to ensure their knowledge of this process and what it will and will not do for them.
- Pre-mark your dig area or route with white markings and document the pre-marks with photos or video.
- Call 811 to reach the UNCC and request locates and schedule a meeting to reinforce the process to the locator in your project area.
- Log all ticket responses into the ticket log; do not accept verbal responses, instead insist on written communication through fax or e-mail.
- Contact all Tier 2 members and log responses.
- After all marking have been made, walk the site with your sketch and available drawings. If the marks on the ground do not match the sketch or drawings, call 811 for a second notice ticket.
- Photograph all markings from different angles and add them to the log.

- Add locator sketches to the log.
- Survey the site for signs of topside visual clues of utilities that have not been marked. Also, search for newly installed utilities that might have been installed since the ticket was complete, such as a fresh trench. If you find any unmarked utilities, call 811 for a second notice.
- Photograph all markings from various angles before excavation and add them to the log.
- Maintain the marks on a regular basis.
- Understand the tolerance zone for markings in Colorado is 18 in. either side of the paint.
- When digging or boring anywhere within this 18-in. tolerance zone, pothole the utility and create a field sketch notating utility, size, dimensions and exact location. Log this information.
- If you encounter an unmarked or unknown line, immediately call 811.
- Keep your case for reasonable care book/log on file at all times on jobsites and retain it as part of your permanent records.

Just a few simple steps and adherence to the process of precise information gathering and thorough documentation can save you time, money and help ensure personal safety on the jobsite. In some cases, companies choose to make this one person's sole responsibility. If that is not possible within your organization, consider outsourcing to a company that specializes in damage prevention. In any event, creating a case for reasonable care can be an invaluable resource in the unfortunate event that an accident occurs on a jobsite.