

Why Your Municipality Should Join "Dig Safe"

With increased activity in the telecommunications and electric industry, and the gas pipeline business, Maine communities are finding their underground utilities under siege by cable companies, telecommunications service providers, and pipeline contractors. How can you protect your municipality's assets: the utilities themselves, your citizens, and your employees? The answer is simple..... join Dig Safe.

By State Statute, everybody is required to call Dig Safe before excavating anywhere in the State of Maine. If your town or agency belongs to the Dig Safe agency, then they will notify you of all excavations occurring in the town. However, if you do not belong to Dig Safe, then all excavators, public or private, should be calling the Town, or water/sewer district, for you to locate before digging occurs around your public utilities. With the liability factor alone, communities should be taking advantage of this service.

Liability

The law says that if an "excavator" does not give notice of an excavation, or acts in a reckless or negligent manner, whether damage occurs or not, the excavator commits a civil violation with penalties up to \$1,000 and is responsible for any damage it causes to underground utilities and for the costs of lost services experienced by those receiving the benefits of the severed utility. Not to mention costs associated with loss of property or life!

Benefits

Dig Safe is a preventative measure. By alerting members before anyone excavates in your community, Dig Safe may save your community hundreds of thousands of dollars by not having to repair underground facilities. This alert identifies the contractor, the date and time of the dig, and the nature of the work being done. Most importantly, it gives the municipality (or local utility) the opportunity to examine the job site and mark their facilities. This will protect your underground utilities and insure that citizens get uninterrupted service.

Membership

There are two classifications of membership.

General Members are public or municipal utilities and private water companies. They must have less than 50 miles of trench line and average less than 50 calls per month, per year. The charge for General Membership is \$3.00 per notification from Dig Safe. However, starting February 1, 2000, the charge will only be \$1 per call if a teletype, computer, or other electronic means is used to receive the calls from Dig Safe. If an electronic device is not available, then it will be \$6 per call.

Principal Members are those that have greater than 50 miles of gas lines, electricity, cable television, telephone, and other types of underground plant. Membership costs are determined by a formula.

To receive more information of Dig Safe System services or to apply for membership, please contact Executive Director Robert Finelli at 781/721-1191 or 877/344-7233 or e-mail at digsafetr@aol.com. They also have a website at www.digsafe.com.

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