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# Property Owners: Get The "Full Scoop" Before You Dig.

Property Owners: This fact sheet provides important information to supplement the Dig Safe® brochure. So it is only part of the story. To ensure your safety, please also review the "Dig Safe in Maine" brochure, available for free from the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

**Q: I'm a property owner, not a professional excavator. Why should I care about Dig Safe®?**

A: Careless digging, drilling and landscaping cause disruption of utility services, personal injury and environmental damage. In addition, as a property owner, you may own some or all of the underground utilities on your land. As a result, you have added responsibility when someone is digging on your property, and should damage occur, you may be responsible. So whether you're doing it yourself, or hiring a professional excavator, before you start your project, make sure you fully understand Maine's rules for safe digging.

**Q: What is Dig Safe?**

A: Dig Safe is an organization created to promote public safety and avoid costly damage to underground utility lines by providing a call system to help identify where these lines are located. When informed of an excavation, Dig Safe notifies its member utilities to mark underground lines they own or maintain.

**Q: When do I need to call Dig Safe? Isn't it just big projects that matter?**

A: No. You're required to call Dig Safe whenever you're planning a project — large or small — that disturbs the ground in any way using mechanical methods. These may include:

- Installing mailboxes or clotheslines
- Planting trees or shrubs
- Rebuilding walls or driveways
- Major landscaping projects or building additions
- Installing swimming pools
- Installing sewer lines, septic systems or drains

**Q: How far in advance should I call?**

A: First, pre-mark the boundaries of your planned excavation with white paint, flags or stakes. Add your or your excavator's initials to the pre-mark so locators know they are at the right site. Then call 1-888-DIGSAFE at least three business days — but no more than 30 calendar days — before digging. Also call any local utilities that Dig Safe did not indicate it would notify, such as local water and sewer services, since many of these are not members of Dig Safe, but may own or maintain underground lines on your property. All of these utilities, including small local utilities, must, on request, mark their lines for you.

**Q: How do I pre-mark an area for excavation during the winter?**

A: During winter months, pre-mark the boundaries of your planned excavation with flags or stakes.

**Q: If I hire someone to dig on my property, am I still responsible for calling Dig Safe and "non-member" utilities?**

A: If you've hired an excavator, check with them to be sure they've called Dig Safe and "non-member" utilities. If you are acting as the excavator, you must make the calls.

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**Q: I am hand digging on my property. Do I still need to call Dig Safe?**

A: You don't have to, since Dig Safe rules only cover mechanical excavation, but it's still a good idea to call Dig Safe when you plan to hand dig. Some lines may be located close to the surface and can easily be damaged by hand digging. This is especially true of cable TV, phone and electric lines. So even for hand digging, call Dig Safe. After all, if you hit a line, even if only hand digging, you can still injure yourself, cause service interruptions, and be held responsible by utility companies for damaging underground lines.

**Q: How do I know if I own underground utilities on my property, and what difference does it make?**

A: Many people own some of the underground lines serving their property. If you're unsure whether you own some, call the individual utilities (electricity, natural gas, telephone, cable TV, water and sewer) serving you. If you own any lines, and someone is excavating on your property, you must mark the location of the lines you own. Utility company crews only mark the location of lines they own or maintain. You must also mark underground facilities like water supply lines running between a private well and a home, home septic system lines, and electric/other lines serving outdoor lighting or other buildings on the property.

**Q: How do I know where the lines I own are located? And how do I mark them?**

A: You can locate them yourself, or you can try to hire someone to do it. If you want to do it yourself, first get a sense of where the lines are located. See where they enter your house, either around your foundation, or if you do not have a foundation, where they surface near your house. Then, if your proposed excavation involves digging near the street, see where the utilities have marked their services in or near the street. Often, the lines run directly between the two points, but because this is not always true, you must identify the paths of lines you own across your property.

To figure out exactly where the lines run, either hand-dig test holes, or try to rent a utility locating device or hire a utility locating service. For a list of locating services, visit the PUC website. Hiring a utility locating service for non-metallic water and septic system lines, however, may not be practical. You may also want to ask your builder, developer, well driller, or municipal plumbing inspector for information on where these lines were built. Finally, you may want to seek the advice or assistance of an excavator for help locating lines you own.

When marking lines, follow the industry color code, using appropriate colors for the services you're marking.

- **Red**: electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables
- **Yellow**: gas, oil, steam, petroleum and gaseous materials
- **Orange**: communications, alarm and signal lines, cables or conduit
- **Blue**: potable water
- **Green**: sewers and drain lines
- **Purple**: reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines
- **Pink**: survey markings
- **White**: proposed excavation

**Q: What do I do if an underground line on my property is hit?**

A: If an underground utility line is damaged, immediately notify the affected utility, and if safety is a concern, call 911 or the fire department. You are required to file an Incident Report with the PUC any time an underground facility is hit or you observe a violation of the Dig Safe rule. For an Incident Report form, call the PUC at (207) 287-3831 or 800-452-4699, or visit them at www.maine.gov/mpuc.

**The Maine PUC is taking an active enforcement role and the consequences for non-compliance are severe. Negligence and non-compliance with the above rules may result in fines that could reach $5,000 or more.**

**For a free brochure on Dig Safe in Maine, or a copy of the rules affecting Maine property owners, contact the PUC.**

**Maine Public Utilities Commission**
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**18 State House Station**
**Augusta, ME 04333-0018**
**(207) 287-3831 / 800-452-4699**
**www.maine.gov/mpuc**

**Dig Safe System, Inc.**
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