

EXCAVATING AND UTILITIES

AVOIDING CONTACT

LOCATING AND MARKING UTILITIES

The Utility Locator should provide information using labeled stakes, flags, and/or highly visible paint marks continuously or at regular intervals on the surface of the ground.

The markings should clearly indicate the center line of the utility line and the limits of underground structures, where applicable, in the defined area of the proposed excavation.

DOCUMENTATION

The Utility Locator should also provide a diagram describing the location information to the Excavator.

The diagram should indicate in clear legible terms the location information including additional clarifications, distances from fixed objects, orientation, and any unusual depths, if known.

ACCURACY

Location accuracy shall be considered to be six feet on either side of the surface center line location or six feet on either side of the marked limits of the underground structure.

Irrespective of the depth of the utility line, the Excavator must not use mechanical excavating equipment to dig within the six feet zone to locate/expose the utility line.

SIX FOOT RULE

Where does the “six foot hand dig only” rule come from?

From SCWI-8715-0008, “Construction Safety and Health Program”

9.25.1 General Requirements

1. Interference Tolerances: Known or questionable interferences shall be hand-dug or vacuum excavated within six (6) feet (1.8 meters) of the interferences.

Hand-dug means excavated using a shovel with a wooden or insulated handle, not including picks, bars, stakes, or other earth piercing devices.

CAUTIONS

At no time should an Excavator perform mechanical excavation within six feet of the identified utility location without first hand digging test holes to determine the exact center line and depth of cover of the utility line.

CAUTIONS (cont.)

Where the proposed excavation is to be parallel and within six feet of a utility line, the Excavator shall expose the utility line by hand digging a series of test holes along the entire route at regular intervals.

EXCAVATING AFTER LOCATING UTILITY

Where test holes in an area have been completed and the utility line located, mechanical excavation may take place provided the following procedures are used:

- (a) wherever possible, mechanical excavating equipment should be operated parallel to the direction of the utility line when the excavation is within six feet of the utility line; and
- (b) mechanical excavation must not be used closer than 1 foot in any direction to the utility line;
- (c) excavation within 1 foot in any direction of the utility line must be carried out by hand-digging