

Avoiding Utility Strikes

Toolbox 1: Underground essential services information - transcript

Welcome to SafeWork SA's toolbox series on avoiding utility strikes. This series has been developed for anyone, including home renovators, who are planning on digging or working near overhead power lines.

So, what are utilities? Utilities are services that supply electricity, communications, gas, street lights, water and sewerage. They are supplied via cables, conduits, ducts, fibre optics, pipes and wires. Sometimes you can see signs of them, but often they are buried, unseen, or forgotten.

The consequences of striking underground or overhead infrastructure can be significant such as service interruptions, costly repair bills, injury and even death can be a real possibility.

Incidents might not happen right away. They can be delayed especially if contact damage is unreported and goes unrepaired.

Imagine if power was cut to a hospital, or an emergency call centre was without communication lines?

Because damage can affect whole communities, it's essential this network is protected.

No matter your project size, whether for business or private, you need to get as much information as possible about the location of all utility services to prevent you from accidentally damaging them.

You could be installing a sign post, landscaping a front yard or building a fence, using a ladder, or constructing a multi-lane highway. This series is for you.

We start the series with how to get information on underground services, steps that need to be taken to locate those services and the risks associated with excavation work.

We continue with safe distances for people and equipment working in the vicinity of overhead power lines, and also go through safe distances when building a structure, including scaffolding near power lines.

The final toolbox explains what actions to take if you strike a gas or a power line.

This toolbox will show you the process of getting free underground essential services information, their limitations and why this information is only the first step.

Dial before you dig

'Dial Before You Dig' is a free national community service that connects people undertaking excavation work with the owners of underground services.

Anyone planning to dig, whether in the city, at home, or on an industrial property should contact Dial Before You Dig before starting – no matter what the job – domestic, civil or commercial.

Dial Before You Dig helps with the free exchange of information between you and the utility owners to help you get the job done safely.

The service is designed to protect South Australia's vital underground network of pipes and cables and those individuals working around them.



Before you dig

Before digging, the first step is to lodge an enquiry with Dial Before You Dig at 1100.com.au or call the national call centre on 1100. You will need to provide information on your project including location, type of work and timelines.

Once you have provided the information, Dial Before You Dig responds directly to you with an email confirming your enquiry and sends your information to the owners of all underground services who are Dial Before You Dig members.

The utility owners affected in your proposed area of work will respond directly to you with cable and pipe locations, generally in the form of plans. You may get a number of separate plans depending on what services run through your project area.



Plans

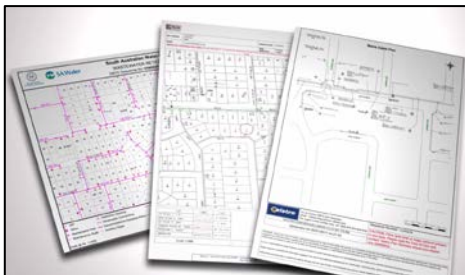
Study the plans closely to make sure they are for the correct location and make sure you understand what the symbols mean before you proceed.

If you don't understand any part of the information, contact the service owner.

Utility owners may provide additional instructions on locating and working near their underground assets.

This may include Duty of Care statements, details of accredited locators, permit information, instructions on using certain equipment around assets, and how to obtain onsite assistance if required.

All information provided by the utility owners must be taken into consideration and kept available with the plans onsite and referred to before and as you dig. Ensure you have received all plans before starting work.



Limitations

Be aware Dial Before You Dig plans alone do not include service lead-ins to property and may not identify all underground pipes or cables. Some may be part of a private installation and some of Australia's underground asset owners are not members of Dial Before You Dig.

Never assume that the plans you receive from your enquiry contain the exact location of underground assets. The plans indicate what services are present and should be used in conjunction with service location which is further explained in Toolbox 2 – Locating underground utilities.

If you find any errors in the plans you have, please contact the asset owner and advise them so they can update their records.

Summary

Contact Dial Before You Dig at www.1100.com.au or call 1100 before you start work.

Ensure you receive all the plans before you start digging and call the service owner if you don't understand the plans or symbols.

Always keep plans available on site and make others aware of them.

Remember underground location plans provide information about network presence only, they do not pinpoint the exact location.

Now that you know more about obtaining Underground essential services information, toolbox 2 will explain how to physically find utility assets on site.

More information

For further information on work health and safety matters, visit the SafeWork SA website at safework.sa.gov.au or call 1300 365 255.