

Dig Safely, Dig Safe

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This article is being written to clarify the requirements for surveyors to contact Dig Safe prior to performing certain surveying related activities.

“Excavation”, is defined as “An operation for the purpose of movement or removal of earth, rock or the materials in the ground including, but not limited to, digging, blasting, augering, backfilling, test boring, drilling, pile driving, grading, plowing in, hammering, pulling in, jacking in, trenching, tunneling and demolition of structures, excluding excavation by tools manipulated only by human power for gardening purposes and use of blasting for quarrying purposes.” [MGL Ch. 82, Section 40 and 220 CMR, 99.02]

As surveyors, we perform several activities that qualify as excavations. These activities include, but are not limited to staking, probing, digging, boring and setting of stakes or monuments. The Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities has verbally verified that if you plan to break the surface of the earth, you are required to have the area marked by the utility companies. The problem is, most utility companies and their subcontractors do not mark for planning purposes and assume that any work requested by a surveying or engineering firm is intended for planning.

Dig Safe System, Inc. is a communication network, assisting excavators, contractors and property owners in complying with state law by notifying the appropriate utilities before digging. Dig Safe, a free service, notifies member companies of proposed excavation projects. In turn, these

member utilities visit the site and identify the location of underground facilities. Those companies who are not members of Dig Safe must be contacted separately from Dig Safe.

Fortunately, some of the Dig Safe process can be performed on-line. You must register your company as a contractor, which involves completing a short form. Dig Safe will issue a Contractor Identification Number within a few hours of submission of the form.

The marking of certain locations can be applied for though the ‘Quick Ticket’ application. The application to mark any location can be applied for by calling Dig Safe or sending a fax. Be sure to pre-mark the area with white flags prior to calling Dig Safe.

The information Dig Safe requires for an official request can be found on the website. The form will request the following information be provided:

- Your contractor’s ID number
- The caller’s name and title
- The company name and address
- The next line on the form asks for you to check whether you are a “contractor,” “member,” “public” or “other” type of requester. Use the option of “other” and fill in “Surveyor and Engineer”
- Latitude and Longitude (optional)
- Address/Intersection of the site
- Additional Information
- Nature of Work—“Probing, staking and/or setting bounds.” This is the most important piece of information. It is important to ensure the description states activities that will potentially affect underground utilities. This specific wording was suggested to us when we applied

for our contractor’s number.

- Depth (feet)—more than 4 feet
- Area—entire property
- Pre-marked (?) “YES.” They will not accept your request unless it has been pre-marked.
- Start Date and Time—give the day that the job is scheduled. Dig Safe provides the service within 72 hours.
- The question area of “Reason” with the options of “E” (Emergency), “V” (Violation), “B” (Blasting), “SP” (State Permit), need only be filled in if the situation applies.
- The exactor doing the work is your company.

There are three disclaimers on the form:

1. There may be non-member utilities in the area that you need to notify.
2. Electric and other companies may not mark lines they don’t own or maintain.
3. The excavator is responsible to maintain marking placed by member utilities.

It is important to ensure the description states activities that will potentially affect underground utilities. This specific wording suggested to us when we applied for our contractor’s number is “Probing, staking and/or setting bounds.”

Once you have provided this information, you will be given a Dig Safe Ticket Number and the Date and Time that the project will be marked.

Under State Law, the utility companies have 72 hours to mark the area. If an area is not marked within 72 hours, contact Dig Safe and file a complaint.

Dig Safe can be contacted at: 1-888-DIG-SAFE (1-888-344-7233) or digsafe.com. Be safe out there!

TOWN-NAME TRIVIA QUESTION:

What town was formerly known as Plumtrees?

Answer on page 14