

FAQs for Safe Dig Month

What is Safe Dig Month?

April marks the start of spring digging season, and is also National Safe Dig Month.

During this month, the Montgomery County Board of County Commissioners is teaming up with The Siebenthaler Company and the Miami Valley Utility Damage Prevention Council to promote safe digging practices and encourage citizens and businesses to call the Ohio Utilities Protection Services (O.U.P.S.) at 811 before any digging or excavation project.

A utility line is damaged by digging once every three minutes nationwide, and one-third of these incidents are caused by failure of the professional excavator or homeowner to call 811 before beginning their digging project.

Why should you call before you dig?

Calling 811 before you dig can prevent utility outages, property damage, personal injury and even death.

Calling 811 before you dig is important for safety reason, but it's also the law. By law, everyone must call OUPS at 811 to get utilities marked before they dig.

- *ORC Sec. 3781.28.(A) Except as otherwise provided in divisions (C), (D), (E), and (F) of this section, at least forty-eight hours but not more than ten working days before commencing excavation, the excavator shall notify a protection service of the location of the excavation site and the date on which excavation is planned to commence.*

How do you get utilities marked before you dig?

- Anyone can get underground utilities marked by calling 811 or 1-800-362-2764, or by submitting an online dig request at www.oups.org. When calling 811, Ohioans are connected to Ohio Utilities Protection Service, which notifies the appropriate utility companies of the intent to dig.
- Citizens and contractors should mark the area in which they intend to dig with white flags or white spray paint. Pre-marking the proposed dig site is also required by law.
- Professional locators are then sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags or spray paint.

- Once lines have been accurately marked, digging can begin around marked lines.
- Digging inside of the tolerance zone of a utility must be done by hand digging in a safe and prudent manner. The *tolerance zone* of a utility is 18" on either side of the line plus the line diameter (if diameter is not noted, it is assumed to be 2").
- Anyone can visit <http://newtina.oups.org/newtinweb/ResponseDisplay.nas>, type in their ticket number, and see how each utility has responded to their ticket. This system is called "Positive Response," which is now required by law.

When should you call O.U.P.S. at 811?

Before beginning any digging project, citizens and businesses should call 811 at least 48 hours, but no more than 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays),.

Some digging projects that would require a call to 811 might include:

- Landscaping
- Digging holes for fence posts or a mailbox
- Anchoring supports for decks and swings sets
- Planting trees
- Removing tree roots
- Driving landscaping stakes into the ground
- Installing a retainer wall

Even small digging projects can cause utility damage and outages, property damage, and personal injury. Always call 811 before you dig!

What are Utility Color Codes?

When utility company representatives mark a location, they use colored flags and/or paint to identify the type of underground service.

- **Red** - Electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables
- **Yellow** - Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or gaseous materials
- **Orange** - Communication, alarm or signal lines, cables or conduit
- **Blue** - Potable water
- **Purple** - Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines
- **Green** - Sewers and drain lines
- **Pink** - Temporary survey markings
- **White** - Proposed excavating

What do you do if you hit a utility line?

- For your safety, you should walk away immediately and take steps to clear the area to protect yourself and your crew.
- If a substance starts releasing into the air, such as natural gas, call 9-1-1.
- Contact the utility company responsible for the utility line.
- Don't try to repair or stop a leak yourself.
- Don't use anything that might create a spark, such as a cell phone.