

## Call Before You Dig: Six Safety Tips for Buried Utilities

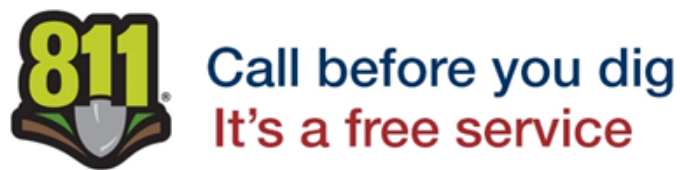
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With outdoor temperatures on the rise, the frequency of excavation work increases. It is no wonder, then, that April is known as National Safe Digging Month - a time to raise awareness about trenching hazards and the risks of striking underground utilities and pipelines. These situations present serious dangers to electrical workers.

Every digging project – regardless of size – requires communication with the Illinois One-Call System (JULIE). At least three days – but not more than ten days – prior to beginning work, submit a locate request online at [www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com) or dial 811.

Staff are available 24 hours to receive details about any planned dig, including the type and location of the project. In response, JULIE will provide a Dig Number, a list of the underground utility companies to be notified, and an approved project start date and time.



Follow these safety steps to help ensure an excavation occurs without any incident or injury:

**1. Always Have a Valid 811 Ticket**

Before starting work, double-check that your Dig Number ticket is valid and includes the correct location, start and end dates, contractor details, and project type.

**2. Confirm Utility Responses Before Digging**

Be sure that every utility company has responded by placing site markings or by clearing your ticket. Physically inspect the project area for above-ground signs, too.

**3. Protect Utility Markings**

Preserve all flags, stakes, and paint markings. If weather or site conditions make the markings unclear, then submit another locate request. It's easy...Dial 811.

#### 4. Pothole or Test Dig to Expose Utilities

Utility company markings are only approximate. The use of hand tools or a soft-dig method can safely verify exact locations within the designated safety margin area.

## 5. Use Caution with Heavy Equipment

Exercise extreme care when operating heavy machinery near buried lines. Because backhoes can be particularly damaging, use a "spotter" to identify hazards nearby.

## 6. Slope It - Shore It - Shield It

Trench collapses can be fatal. Slope the walls at a safe angle or bench them in steps; shore the trench with protective supports; and shield workers using trench boxes.



The Illinois One-Call System protects contractors from harm and prevents service interruptions in the local community. These potential outcomes are very costly and entirely unnecessary. Therefore, planning ahead of any excavation work is critically important. So, too, is proper training about best practices to be utilized during underground operations.

Especially this month, but also year-round, PowerForward DuPage and the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council are pleased to partner and provide IBEW Local 701 employees and employers with the skills they need to create safer work environments.

Robert Lahey is the President & CEO of the Chicagoland Construction Safety Council located in Hillside, Illinois. For more than 30 years, the Council has delivered programs and services in support of its commitment to Safe Workers – Safer Futures. To learn more about excavation safety training opportunities, visit [www.buildsafe.org](http://www.buildsafe.org).