

# **Washington's Guide to Safe Digging 2026**



**Brought to you by 3BC and 811 Stakeholders.**

**In Memory: Nick Massie and Sen Bill Ramos**

**05/26 – Replaces all previous versions**







Know what's **below.**  
**Call** before you dig.

## **Preface**

The information in this book contains tips and best practices to help you comply with Washington State's Dig Law. This is not legal advice or an interpretation of the law. This book contains both industry best practices and requirements under Washington State dig law: RCW 19.122 (included at the back of the book). The book also contains tips on using the 811- call center as well as web links to associations that support facility operators and excavators. Washington State 811 stakeholders included facility operators, contractors, excavators, government agencies, and other interested organizations and individuals so they can work collaboratively to protect public health and safety, enhance worker safety, promote public awareness of state practices, and prevent disruptions to essential utility services. Their shared commitment is reflected in cooperative efforts aimed at achieving these important goals, including orderly planning and installation of buried facilities.

## **Acknowledgments:**

Washington one call, Utilities and Transportation Commission, National Utility Contractors Association of Washington, and the Washington State Dig Law Safety Committee.

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## **Resources:**

### **State 811**

Dig Safe Washington (811 Stakeholders) -

[DigSafeWA.com](http://DigSafeWA.com)

### **Facility Operator**

Association of Washington Cities (Cities and Towns) -

[www.wacities.org](http://www.wacities.org)

Washington State Association of Counties (Counties) -

[www.wsac.org](http://www.wsac.org)

Washington Public Utility Districts Association (PUD) -

[www.wpuda.org](http://www.wpuda.org)

Evergreen Rural Water of Washington (Water) -

[www.erwow.org](http://www.erwow.org)

American Gas Association (Natural Gas) - [www.aga.org](http://www.aga.org)

Edison Electric Institute (Electric) - [www.eei.org](http://www.eei.org)

USTelecom - The Broadband Association

(Telecommunications) - [www.ustelecom.org](http://www.ustelecom.org)

The Washington Association of Sewer & Water Districts

(Sewer/Water) - [www.waswd.org](http://www.waswd.org)

The American Water Works Association (Water) -

[www.awwa.org](http://www.awwa.org)

Water Environment Federation (Wastewater) -

[www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org)

The Internet & Television Association (Cable TV) -

[www.ncta.com](http://www.ncta.com)

American Petroleum Institute (Petroleum/Oil Pipelines)

- [www.api.org](http://www.api.org)

International District Energy Association (Steam) -

[www.districtenergy.org](http://www.districtenergy.org)

### **Professional Excavator**

National Utility Contractors Association of Washington

- [www.nucawa.org](http://www.nucawa.org)

Associated General Contractors of Washington -

[www.agcwa.com](http://www.agcwa.com)

Master Builders Association - [www.mbaks.com](http://www.mbaks.com)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers -

[www.ibew.org](http://www.ibew.org)

### **Third Party Resources**

Common Ground Alliance (Best Practices) –

[www.commongroundalliance.com](http://www.commongroundalliance.com)

American Public Works Association (Public Works) –

[www.apwa.org](http://www.apwa.org)

### **Regulators**

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

(UTC) – [www.utc.wa.gov](http://www.utc.wa.gov)

### **Statutes and Regulations**

Washington State Dig Law – RCW 19.122 - Chapter

19.122 RCW: UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) –

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/>

### **Pipeline Companies Damage Prevention Contacts**

Avista	1-800-227-9187
Cascade Natural Gas	1-888-522-1130
City of Ellensburg Gas	1-509-962-7124
Marathon Petroleum	1-800-725-1514
McChord Pipeline Company	1-253-593-6085
NW Natural	1-800-882-3377
Olympic Pipeline	1-888-271-8880
Phillips 66	1-877-267-2290
Puget Sound Energy	1-888-225-5773
TC Energy	1-800-661-3805
Trans mountain	1-360-398-1541
Williams Pipeline	1-800-972-7733

## **Glossary**

**CBYD (Call Before You Dig)**

**Call 811 (or notify them online) Before You Dig**

**WSDLSC**

**WA STATE DIG LAW SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**NOTICE**

**Inform facility operators, via 811, two (2) to ten (10) full business days before starting excavation. Week-ends, holidays, and the day you contacted 811 do not count in the notice.**

**811**

**You can reach 811 by dialing these three numbers "8-1-1," or if your phone system does not accept starting with an "8" dial "1-800-424-5555."**

**ONLINE**

**Give notice online via [www.DigSafeWA.com](http://www.DigSafeWA.com), click "Excavator" then on next page click "login."**

**EXCAVATION or EXCAVATOR**

**Means any operation including the installation of signs, in which earth, rock, or other material on or below the ground is moved or otherwise displaced by any means (RCW**

**[19.122.020](#)). NOTICE: This includes using a vacuum truck.**

**FACILITY OPERATOR**

**"Facility operator" means any person who owns an underground facility or is in the business of supplying any utility service or commodity for compensation.**

**"Facility operator" does not include a utility customer who owns a service lateral that terminates at a facility operator's main utility line. (RCW [19.122.020](#))**

**EMERGENCY**

**Means any condition constituting a clear and present danger to life, health, or property, or a customer service outage due to an unplanned utility outage that requires immediate action where an excavator or facility operator has a crew on-site or in route. (RCW [19.122.020](#)). Notice: In life threatening situations call 9-1-1 first.**

**EMERGENCY EXEMPTIONS IN DIG LAW:** An emergency excavation, but only with respect to white lining and notice (meaning not required to white line or give two to ten full business days' notice) requirements specified in RCW 19.122.030 (1) and (2), and provided that the excavator provides notice to a one-number locator (811) service at the earliest practicable opportunity. Facility operators must promptly respond to a notice of emergency excavation. Prompt means to dispatch locators without undue delay. Best practice = report your emergency excavation to 811, either online or by calling, then wait for the locators for as long as you can. Dangerous situations require immediate attention, but safe work methods must still be used by all parties. Do not call-in dig jobs as emergency excavation if the work does not meet the legal definition of an emergency.

### **BEST PRACTICE**

All parties should strive to maintain a list of mobile, home, and after-hours numbers. This process is facilitated by active participation in your local Utilities Coordinating Council. Keep in mind that utilities damaged during any excavation, or delays caused by facility operators' failure to comply with the dig law, are subject to the complaint review process by either party. Keep good notes, photos, and other documentation: if damage occurs, through no fault of your own, you will need evidence that you followed the RCW and best practices as taught in NUCA\* DIG SAFE training. \*For more info visit: <https://nucawa.org>

### **811 NOTIFICATION PROCESS**

Notices to facility operators of planned excavation is processed by a call center managed, under contract with 3BC members, by One Call Concepts, Inc.

## 5 Steps to a Safe Excavation in Washington

- 1 Mark the boundary of the excavation area with white lining before notifying 811
- 2 Provide notice of the excavation to all facility operators online or over the phone
- 3 Don't excavate until all facility operators have marked their locatable underground facilities or provided information for their unlocatable buried facilities
- 4 Maintain Locate Marks
- 5 Use Safe Work Methods

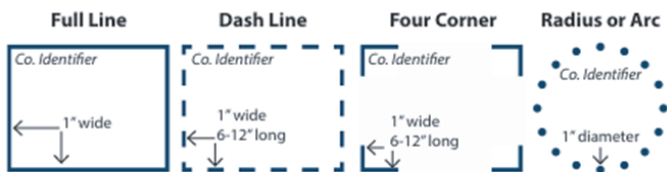
Skipping a step can result in injury, utility outage, or penalties.

- 1 **White line the Boundary of the Excavation Area before notifying 811**  
**RCW 19.122.030**

(1)(a) Unless exempted under RCW 19.122.031, before commencing any excavation, an excavator must mark the boundary of the excavation area with either white paint or when necessary, white flags applied on the ground of the worksite.

The law uses the term “white lining.” The dig law requires white lining but does not provide methods or standards for how to comply. Below are examples, from the Common Ground Alliance Best Practices (Ver 21), of how-to white line: The following images denote industry’s best practices, not legal mandates.

### Single Point Excavation Marking Examples:



Features:

Company identifier: Use the same company name used on your 811 tickets.

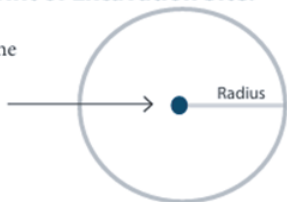
Solid lines: 1 inch wide

Dash lines: 1 inch wide, 6 – 12 inches long, 4 – 50 feet apart – depending on the terrain and visibility of the excavation site. Place marks so they can be easily seen by the locator. Dots: 1 inch diameter, 4 feet or less apart.

### Single Stake Marking Center Point of Excavation Site:

Place white flag or stake at the center of the excavation site. Write in dark permanent ink:

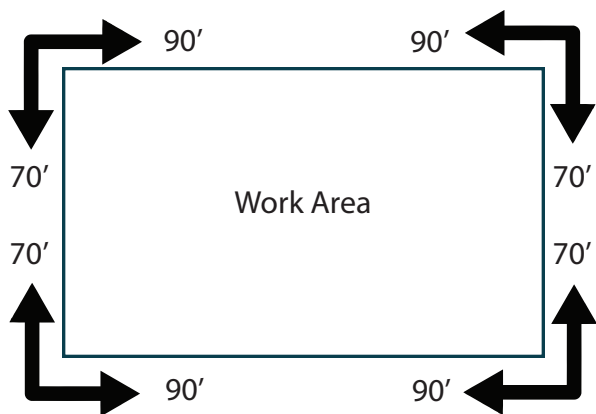
- Company name
- Radius of the excavation



### Trenching, Boring, and Other Continuous Excavations:



Large Area Excavation Site. Mark with Brackets, with distance, at Each Corner.



2

**Notify 811 before you dig. Dial "811" or "800(424-5555)" or use online option.**

### **Washington State Excavators:**

First, white line the boundary of your proposed excavation site, then provide notice of excavation via DigSafe-WA.com: choose Excavator. This takes you to iSITE where you submit or manage your locate requests online.

### **Key Terms Explained**

- White lining: Use white paint or flags to mark Your planned excavation area on the ground, making it clear where work will take place.
- iSITE ticketing system: The online system, provided by the 811-call center, used to create, track, and manage 811 notices and ticket updates.

## Instructions for Returning iSITE Users

1. Go to [DigSafeWA.com](http://DigSafeWA.com).
2. Click on Professional Excavator.
3. Select Login.
4. Enter your username and password to access the iSITE Ticketing System.

## Instructions for New iSITE Users

1. Go to [DigSafeWA.com](http://DigSafeWA.com).
2. Click on Professional Excavator.
3. Select Create an Account and follow the registration prompts.
4. During business hours (Monday–Friday, 8am–5pm), a Customer Service Representative will assist you via online messaging to set up your login and password.
5. After registration, you may change your password at any time within the iSITE Ticketing System.

## Support Information

- For questions, training, or basic help, click the “?” on the first page that opens after your login.
- To speak directly to a customer service representative please dial 811. If your phone does not allow you to dial 811, call (800) 424-5555.

## Understanding 811 Notice Types: A Reference Guide for Excavators and the Public.

### What Are 811 Notices?

- 811 Notice: A required notification to utility companies before you dig, so they can locate and mark underground lines in the white-lined excavation area.
- White lining: Marking your planned excavation area on the ground with white paint or flags to show exactly where work will happen.
- iSITE ticketing system: The online platform, provided by the 811-call center, used to submit, track, and update your 811 notifications.

### Planned Excavation Notice

A Planned Excavation notice is used when you plan to begin digging in two (2) to ten (10) full business days.

- Submit your notice to 811 at least two (2), but no more than ten (10), business days before your work is scheduled to begin. Excavation must begin within ten (10), business days.
- Before the “work to begin” date, utility companies (also called facility operators) will:
  - Locate and mark any buried locatable utility lines in your work area and share available information about unlocatable lines.

Each utility company must update the positive response system with the status of your request before your work is due to start. Excavators must check the positive response system and not begin digging until all utilities have responded.

- Positive response: Means a notification from the owner or operator of the underground facility, or their authorized locating contractor, to the one-number locator service confirming marking of locatable buried lines has been completed, or available information has been provided regarding unlocatable facilities.

See RCW 19.122.020(29)

## **Emergency Notice**

Please note in life threatening situations first call 9-1-1. An emergency notice is for situations that are a clear and present danger to life, health, or property, or if there’s an outage of a utility service. Must not be used for routine or scheduled work. Must be on site of the emergency or in route.

- No white lining or minimum notice is required for emergencies.
- Call 811 as soon as possible to report the emergency.
- Utility companies must respond promptly and without undue delay to your emergency notice.

## Design Notice

A Design notice is for planning purposes only: not for digging. It helps you learn where utilities may be located before you start an excavation project.

- Request design information using the iSITE ticketing system.
- No locate requests or notifications are sent to utility companies when you submit a design notice. The transaction is between you and facility operators.
- Based on your project's location, you will receive an email with facility operator design information contacts as required by law.
- Use this information to plan your project: reach out to facility operators if you need more details.

### Update Request

An Update request is used if your project extends beyond the time covered by your original 811 ticket. Utility markings expire forty-five (45) calendar days after your original notice.

- If your original 811 ticket is older than forty-five (45) days submit an update request in the iSITE ticketing system.

## Renew

### Best Practices for Submitting Locate Requests

Accurate and complete locate requests help facility operators mark buried lines correctly, reducing delays and safety risks. Follow these guidelines to ensure compliance and efficiency.

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### 1. Why Well-Defined Requests Matter

- **White lining:** Clearly mark your excavation area to help locators identify and mark underground facilities accurately.
- **Contact information:** Always include the best contact

number on your 811 tickets. Locators often need quick answers—speaking with the field contact is usually more effective than reaching the office.

Tip: There is space for two contact numbers on the ticket—use it!

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## **2. Include Special Instructions**

Provide details that make the locator's job easier:

- Gate codes or access instructions.
  - Check-in requirements at the main office.
  - Homeowner requests for private residences (e.g., call first, watch for pets, use flags instead of paint).
- 

## **3. Timing Compliance**

- Do not submit requests for jobs without valid permits. If the permit is pending, wait for it to clear before you notify 811.
  - Do not submit notices for work starting outside of two (2) to ten (10) full business days. Washington State Dig Law (RCW 19.122.030(2)) requires:  
"An excavator must provide notice to the one-number locator service not less than ten two (2) full business days and not more than (10) full business days before the "scheduled start date." Excavation must begin within this time frame so do not notify 811 if your permit is still pending.
- 

## **4. Submitting on Behalf of Another Party**

Under RCW 19.122.030(1)(c), an excavator (including a general contractor-GC) may authorize another entity to submit locate requests. Important: Each excavator retains full legal responsibility for their compliance.

GCs, upon agreement with subcontractors

- Request the subcontractor's login credentials.
- On the same day you submitted your notice log-in to iSITE and click on "Duplicate a dig"

- Enter your ticket number
- Confirm the work area is identical to your ticket: which now shows your subcontractor's contact name, phone number, email.
- Enter the type of work they will perform.
- Hit "Enter" and the subcontractor will be emailed the ticket you created for them; your name or contact info will not be on their ticket.
- Result = both parties will have a distinct ticket number with their own contact info, their individual type of work, BUT the exact same work area and the tickets will go out on the same day.

This method is legal under RCW [19.122.030](#)(1)(c).

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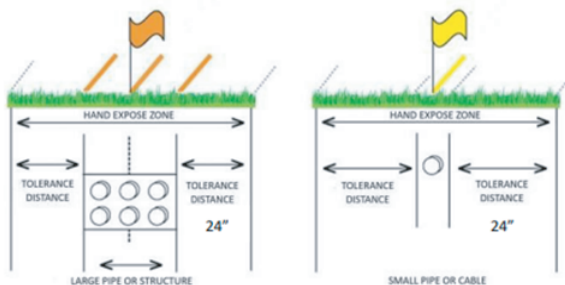
3

Don't excavate until all facility operators have marked their locatable underground facilities or provided information for their unlocatable buried facilities

### **Facility Operator Responsibilities**

Washington State dig law RCW [19.122.030](#)(3) states upon receipt of the notice, a facility operator must do the following:

(a)(i) The facility operator's locatable underground Facilities - provide the excavator with reasonably accurate (meaning within an area the width of 24 inches plus the width of the buried utility plus another 24 inches) information by marking facility location.



--and--

(b) The facility operator's unlocatable or identified but unlocatable underground facilities provide the excavator with available information, including maps and records, as to their location prior to the work-to-begin date provided in the notice under subsection (1) of this section.

As of July 27, 2025, every natural gas and hazardous liquid pipeline facility operator shall treat all their buried lines as locatable. See Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.030(3)(b): For any gas or hazardous liquid pipeline, locate all facilities in accordance with Title 49 C.F.R. Secs. 195.442(c)(4) through (6) and 192.614(c)(4) through (6) as they existed on the effective date of this section, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the commission by rule, consistent with the purpose of this section.

## Positive Response

Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.030(5) states an excavator may not start digging until the excavator has received positive response, via email or viewing on ITIC, from all operators in the area identified in the notice. Prior to the work-to-begin date facility operators shall post to the positive response system. On the work-to-begin date excavators shall check the status of their 811 tickets.

## Confirm Locate Marks are Present:

Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.030(5) states Excavation shall not begin until all buried locatable lines within the white lined dig area are marked and available information has been provided for unlocatable lines.

Next step: Visit the work site to ensure what was posted on positive response is accurate and complete. With your 811 ticket in hand walk the white lined area and compare the facility operators listed with the marks on the ground.

White	Proposed excavation
Pink	Temporary survey markings
Red	Electric power line, cables, conduit, and lightening cables
Yellow	Gas, oil, steam, petroleum, or gaseous materials
Orange	Communication, alarm or signal lines, cables, or conduit
Blue	Potable (Drinking) water
Purple	Reclaimed water, irrigation, and slurry lines
Green	Sewers and drain lines

If a utility has not been marked, or you discover colored marks that are not identified, report it to 811.

## 4

### **Maintain Locate Marks**

Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.030(6)(a) states once marked by a facility operator: an excavator is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the facility operator's markings of underground facilities for the lesser of:

(i) Forty-five calendar days from the date that the excavator provided notice to a one-number locator service pursuant to subsection (1) of this section: or

(ii) The duration of the excavation portion of the project.

### **Best Practices for Maintaining Locate Marks**

Underline or circle colored marks with white. Use offset white markings. Do not interfere with or alter the locate marks painted by facility operator locators. In an area that gets a lot of rain, it is a good practice to take photos or video of the locate marks and store photos in a communal file. A free 811 ticket and project files storage system can be obtained by calling 800-424-5555, ask how to access their National Ticket Management System (NTMS).

## 5

### **Use Safe Work Methods**

Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.020 (32) states "Safe and careful work methods" means methods of excavation, including potholing, hand digging when practical, vacuum excavation methods, pneumatic hand tools, or other technical methods that may be developed.

Washington State dig law RCW 19.122.040 (2) states an excavator shall use reasonable care to avoid damaging underground facilities. An excavator must:

(a) Determine the precise location of underground facilities which have been marked pursuant to RCW 19.122.030:

**This means, don't trust paint. Use safe work methods, to expose and visually verify the buried line.**

(b) Plan the excavation to avoid damage to or minimize interference with underground facilities in and near the excavation area:

(c) Provide such support for underground facilities in and near the construction area, including during backfill operations, as may be reasonably necessary for the protection of such facilities:

(d) Use safe and careful work methods, considering both the known and unknown underground facilities and the surface and subsurface to be excavated. If the marking is on a hard surface, methods of excavation may include pneumatic hand tools or other excavation methods that are commonly accepted as permissible for the type of surface encountered.

## **Best Practices for Planning an Excavation Project**

### **1. Preplanning and design**

- **Identify existing easements and right of ways:** Review plats, maps, and records to locate known underground facilities before design begins.

- **Coordinate early with facility owner/operators:** Maintain continuous communication between designers, project owners, and contractors to identify potential conflicts.

- **Follow codes and standards:** ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and facility owner requirements.

### **2. One call notification (811)**

- White line the boundary of the proposed dig area then provide notice to the 811 center two (2) to ten (10) full business days in advance of the start of excavation.

- Provide accurate information: in addition, if white lining gives precise location, scope, and timing of the planned excavation. What you white line is what will be located and marked.
- Allow time and request a conference for projects 700 linear feet or larger. Also, using the remarks section on the 811 notice to provide the planned starting point and direction of work, or submit additional info using "Ticket Talk"

### **3. Locating and marking**

- Make all employees aware of the uniform color code.
- **Verify markings:** walk the site, with the locator if needed, and confirm that all facilities have been marked.
- **Address unlocatable facilities:** if the line cannot be located, provide available records and facility owner assistance.

### **4. Excavation practices**

- **Use safe work methods:** Hand dig, vacuum excavate or use other nondestructive methods within the "tolerance zone" which is the area around marked facilities.
- **Maintain clearance:** Keep equipment and excavation activity at a safe distance from marked lines.
- **Have facility owners present if needed:** Some operators may send a representative to monitor excavation near critical facilities.

### **5. Communication and Coordination**

- **Hold pre construction meetings:** bring together excavators, facility owners, and project managers to review plans and responsibilities.
- **Update plans as conditions change:** if new facilities are discovered or project scope shifts, notify 811 again and re-mark as necessary.
- **Document everything:** keep records of notifications, markings, and communications.

## 6. Post Excavation

- **Report damages:** if a facility is struck, report it immediately to the facility owner via 811 and to the CGA's damage information reporting tool (DIRT).
- **As built mapping:** Update records to reflect any new or relocated facilities for future reference.

### Use Additional Caution:

## Water, Sewer, and Storm Lines

### How to Avoid Problems When Excavating Near Pressurized Water Lines

Pressurized water lines supply drinking water, fire protection, and irrigation: damage during construction can result in service outages, property loss, or injury. Pressure can range from 25 per square inch to above 200 per square inch. When working in any area near water lines, make sure the valve boxes remain accessible in case an emergency shutdown is needed. Always support excavated water lines and facilities during excavation near critical facilities.

### Bends, Tees, Caps, and Thrust Blocks:

Bends, tees, and caps are installed on the lines to change direction of piping. Thrust blocks are installed at the bends, tees, caps to keep the pipe in place and take the force the pressurized water lines exert when deflected in different directions. Thrust blocks are typically designed for the bearing area of the ground around them.



Example: At 25 psi, an 8-inch line could have 1,256 pounds of force exerted on the thrust block. At 200 psi, this 8-inch line could have 10,048 pounds of force exerted on the thrust block. (Not considering surcharge).

Do not disturb the ground around the thrust block or the thrust block itself. This may result in major leaks or breaks in water lines.

Do not expose a pressurized water main line for a distance greater than one standard pipe length or it may move vertically or horizontally and rupture. Support the line and excavate or expose only the minimal length necessary to complete the crossing.

Do not use calcified backfill material, such as concrete or CDF, against water lines unless water lines are wrapped in 8-mil plastic.

### **Water Services:**

Water services can be made of pliable materials such as soft copper or polyethylene, or more rigid material such as galvanized pipe, schedule 40 or 80 PVC, or other materials. Water service lines should be bedded in sandy, rock-free material prior to backfilling. Caution should be taken when compacting to prevent damaging of service or pulling from mainline.

Do not pull or dent water services. Dents and kinks may not leak immediately, but the water moving inside the service will wear on the defect and create a leak in the future. Report any dents, kinks, or pulling to the water purveyor.

Do not shut down water main lines without the purveyor's permission. Tampering with public water may constitute a Federal offense (Title 42, Section 300i-1 of the U.S. Code). Most water purveyors also have policies with fine schedules that forbid an excavator from tampering or shutting down the existing public system. Critical customers such as clinics, hospitals, and home medical equipment users cannot have the water shut off without notice. Always contact the water purveyor if you have any questions.

## **How to avoid problems when excavating near sanitary sewer and storm sewer lines:**

Sanitary sewer lines are primarily used to dispose of human, industrial, and commercial waste that can contain fecal matter, chemicals, gases, and bloodborne pathogens. Storm sewer lines convey stormwater runoff and groundwater infiltration flows that are vital to keeping surrounding area from flooding. If damage during construction, sanitary sewer and storm water lines can cause significant loss of service, costly property or wildlife damage, and injury. When working in any area where sewer/storm lines are nearby make sure the manhole/and catch basin lids remain accessible in case of an emergency backup or damage occurs.

### **Manholes / catch basins:**

Manholes contain contaminants, flammables, and raw sewage that can affect the air quality inside the manhole. For that reason, confined space entry procedures required by federal, state, or local agencies should be followed for manhole entry, if entry is allowed by the sewer purveyor. Similarly, catch basins are hazardous entry points and require that confined entry practices be utilized as well.

Do not allow construction debris or fluids to enter the manhole / catch basins or sewer/storm lines at anytime. This may cause costly blockage and backups. If debris enters the sewer/storm system, contact the sewer/storm purveyor.

Do not excavate in a way that creates uneven soil pressure near the manhole/catch basin on the sides of the structure or it may shift or topple.

### **Excavation and Backfill Practices Near Sewer/Storm Main & Sewer Service:**

Sewer lines, (mains and services) and storm lines, consist of many different types of pipe: clay,

concrete, PVC, HDPE, Ductile iron, steel, cast iron, CMP, etc. Older brittle pipe may be present. Extreme caution must be used when excavating near existing sewer and storm lines. An 18-inch minimum vertical separation when crossing perpendicular above existing sewer and storm line is safe but it is advisable to confirm with local inspector guidelines. Sewer and storm lines should be re-bedded in rock free material. Caution must be taken when compacting to prevent damaging the pipeline.

Anticipate side sewer laterals to service the structures nearby for sanitary sewer pipelines.

Do not pull, damage, or dent any sewer or storm sewer pipelines or sanitary sewer services. The damaged area may not leak immediately but could in the future. Report any damage to the sewer/storm purveyor immediately.

### **Natural Gas Pipeline Safety:**

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is responsible for developing and enforcing safety standards for natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines located wholly within the state (intrastate lines). The UTC also inspects the portions of interstate natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines located within Washington state: however, the standards and enforcement actions are the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). State agencies, citizen committees, other organizations devoted to pipeline safety and citizens of Washington take special notice of issues relating to damage prevention to pipelines, including excavation on or near buried natural gas, or petroleum facilities.

### **Natural Gas Demands Respect:**

Third-party damage is one of the main reasons for natural pipeline incidents. Excavators must take particular care when working and digging near natural gas pipelines. Natural gas systems are safe, reliable, and

predictable fuel when properly installed, maintained and handled.

**Natural gas can ignite** with a gas to air ratio between 5% to 15%, and an ignition source of 1100°. Natural gas has a specific gravity of .6 which is lighter than air, allowing it to rise. A distinctive odorant is added to aid in leak detection. If a pipeline rupture or leak occurs, natural gas may migrate under paved or hard services into buildings and surrounding areas. If you detect a leak, leave the area at once and contact 911 and your natural gas provider, via 811. Do not use any equipment, electronics, vehicles or tools that could create a spark.

**Natural gas is distributed in a variety of pressures and types of pipe.** Steel and plastic pipelines are widely used throughout Washington ranging in size from 1/2 inch to 36 inches in diameter. Operating pressures vary between low pressure (0.25 psi), immediate pressure (IP 60 psi) and high pressure (HP 100 + PSI). Any excavation occurring around high pressure (HP) pipelines must be monitored continuously by utility personnel.

### **Natural gas incidents:**

Always call 911\* in the event of a gas emergency. Also contact the local utility, by calling 811, to report any damage, leaks or any other natural gas incident. If gas is leaking, evacuate immediate areas where gas is present. Keep people and traffic away and remove any sources of ignition (open flames, turn off engines/equipment, radios, extinguish cigarettes, etc.) around the area of the damaged line until the local utility arrives (key numbers are listed near the front of this book). \*See RCW 19.122.050(1)

**Don't try to repair a damaged or broken natural gas line by covering, crimping, bending, or otherwise restricting the flow.** Don't touch a plastic pipe that is leaking. A spark from static electricity on a plastic pipe could become an ignition source. All repairs must be made by qualified gas company personnel. Any time pipe is dented, or the wrap is scraped the local natural gas provider will need to inspect it before it is buried or

covered with fill. Even if the pipe is just nicked or bent, leave it exposed so the local natural gas provider can inspect it and make any necessary repairs. Avoid damaging small wires near gas pipelines. These wires are used for locating plastic pipes or monitoring steel pipes for corrosion protection. If a wire is broken, contact the local utility for repairs.

**Don't try to extinguish a gas flame or fire: let it burn, and call 911!**

### **Work practices:**

**Directional boring.** In accordance with Washington State dig law, gas lines must be potholed (daylighted) and visually verified prior to boring operations. Contact the local utility to verify potholed facilities prior to the bore operation. Leave potholes open and observe the passage of the bore head as it passes under the utility and as it is pulled back. Notify, by dialing 811, the utility at once of any concerns.

**Supporting exposed gas pipeline.** Once exposed, all natural gas facilities must be properly supported and protected from damage. If excavating parallel to a gas pipeline call your local natural gas company for help with determining adequate support, protection and separation of the pipeline. Failure to properly support pipelines could result in a break or rupture. Each structural support used for an exposed pipeline must be made of a durable, non-combustible material, and must be designed and installed such that:

- Free expansion and contraction of the pipeline between supports or anchors is not restricted.
- Movement of the pipeline does not cause disengagement of the support equipment.
- Damage to the pipe and it's coating is prevented where the pipe contacts the support or anchor.
- When steel piping is supported or anchored, it shall be insulated from the support or anchor.
- The temporary support or anchor shall be removed in its entirety without damage to the pipe and its coating.

**Encroachment:**

Don't build any structures such as sheds, decks, or other permanent structures over any pipelines or other facilities. Aside from being a serious safety issue, natural gas utilities must always have access to their buried gas lines. For this reason, a minimum of twelve (12) inches of separation shall be maintained when crossing or running parallel to distribution lines. High pressure supply lines required thirty-six (36) inches of separation unless special permission is granted by the utility.

**Backfilling natural gas pipelines, and hazardous liquid pipelines:**

When a trench is backfilled, it must be backfilled in a manner that provides firm support under the pipe and prevents damage to the pipe and pipe coating from equipment or from the backfill material. Always use sand or rock-free dirt and backfill six (6) inches above and below natural gas pipelines, avoid compacting directly over the pipeline. Backfill material shall not contain: garbage, cans, glass, recycled glass products, decomposable organic material, or construction debris, washed gravels including pea gravel, material that will not compact, sharp objects, frozen clods, large rocks or stones, pieces of pavement, wood skids or wedges, timbers, hay bales, boulders, or other material that may cause damage to the pipe, pipe coating, or casing/conduit. **NOTE:** Do not unload backfill or pilot directly on top of polyethylene pipe until proper support is provided for the pipe.

Initial backfill shall be sand, or rock free native soil, or soil based select materials that does not contain any rocks. If the native soil contains rocks, then a total of twelve (12) inches of initial backfill shall be placed over the gas pipeline and across the full width of the trench.

Final backfill may be soil-base select material or native soil but shall not contain rocks larger than ten (10) inches diameter to prevent impedance of gas system maintenance. Final backfill shall be sufficient to withstand normal wear and tear from foot traffic, weather, and other activities that may cause erosion.

All backfill shall be consolidated according to the terms of applicable permits and right-of-way agreements. In unimproved areas, the backfill shall be consolidated to match the original soil structure.

Care shall be taken to prevent damage to the buried gas facilities and other underground lines when compacting backfill.

Care shall be taken when compacting around service and branch connections and points of transition between polyethylene and steel to ensure proper support and to protect the pipe and fittings from excessive external loads.

Backfill material shall be compacted in lifts thick enough to prevent damage to the pipe. If the trench is wide enough, the sides of the pipe shall be compacted first. If the compaction is done by:

-Powered hand-operated equipment (such as Bigfoot or Jumping Jack), then the initial backfill lift over the pipe shall be a minimum of 12 inches.

Machine-operated equipment (such as Hoe-Pack or Hydro\_Hammer), then the initial backfill lift over the pipe shall be a minimum of 24 inches.

## **Electricity**

### **Electricity demands respect:**

Electricity can shock, burn, or kill workers if it is not handled properly on the job site. Since electricity always seeks the easiest path to ground, you or any other type of conductor ( metal, wood, trees, machinery / equipment, tools, etc.) touching a power line could provide an immediate path to ground. The result can be severe injury or death.

### **Before starting to work think safety!**

Be observant if you have work to do near power lines or power facilities always consider them to be energized. Call the local utility for more information or to make arrangements to ensure safe working conditions. For your safety, the utility may turn off electricity, place barriers online or as a last resort, relocate them.

Because it takes time to complete this work allow for this time in your job schedule and let the utility know. For example, if it is feasible to take lines out of service, advance notice is required. There may be a charge for work performed by the utility.

## Basic rules for electrical safety:

**Ten (10) ft is considered a minimum safe and legal clearance** for equipment, tools and people when working near overhead power lines and facilities. Never assume that power installations are insulated. State regulations require that a minimum of ten (10) ft be maintained from energized overhead high voltage electrical conductors (up to 50,000 volts) with additional distance required for higher voltages (for example twelve (12) feet - two (2) inches is required for 115,000 volts). (See legal clearance illustration below) For exact distances and other requirements of the law when working near power lines, refer to the appropriate section in Washington Administrative Code. WAC 296-54-529



**Equipment near lines can accidentally contact the line** and injure the worker using the equipment. Hand-carried tools or materials are a common cause of accidental contact. Use extreme caution when carrying ladders, scaffolding poles, piping, or high-rise metal tools near power lines. Heavy or large equipment can be driven into lines accidentally. Special care should be taken not only with cranes, front end loaders, backhoes, and concrete pump trucks that may have sufficient reach to get into the power lines.

**Plan ahead.** If your equipment is operating in the vicinity of power facilities check to ensure that there's

no possibility of accidentally striking a power line or digging into a buried cable.

**Don't lift electrical equipment** and never attempt to move or raise overhead or underground electric lines or electrical equipment. If you need help to make the lines safe or have any doubts or questions about the safety of your job site, call the utility.

**In the event electrical contact occurs with equipment: Do not panic! Remain on the equipment!**

You should be safe where you are. Do not try to get off the crane or excavator. Touching the power source and the ground at the same time could be fatal.

If the equipment is on fire and it is necessary to exit the vehicle or equipment, jump clear of the vehicle while keeping both feet together, avoiding any wires that might be on the ground. Stay calm and jump carefully so that you do not fall back against the equipment or touch the ground and the equipment at the same time. Then **shuffle away**, with both feet together, keeping both feet in contact the ground and touching always. **Continue shuffling for at least 30 feet from the accident site. Instruct all other personnel to stay at least 30 feet away** from the equipment, ropes, and the load. All the equipment, load, and the ground around it could be energized.

## **Horizontal Directional Drilling**

**In Washington State, best practices for horizontal directional drilling (HDD) include the following key considerations.**

Notify 811: Before any excavation or boring, mark the planned drill path using white lining, then, two (2) to ten (10) full business days before commencing drilling, request locates of underground structures and utilities via 811.

Check utilities: Washington dig law requires verifying and safely exposing (daylighting) utilities, by potholing, utility safely before drilling.

High consequence utility lines: Include, but are not limited to gas lines (mains or services), electric lines, water mains, telephone duct runs, toll cables or fiber optic lines. For crossing high consequence utility lines, spot holes must extend at least 24 inches on either side of the located/marked utility line or structure.

Certifications: ensure compliance with state laws and obtain the necessary certifications, such as any required horizontal directional drilling contractor license or directional boring license.

Environmental impact: minimize surface disruption in environmental impact by using horizontal directional drilling (HDD) in urban environments or sensitive ecosystems.

These practices help ensure the safe and efficient installation of underground utilities while protecting the environment and public safety.

### **Fiber Optic Lines**

#### 1. Pre-Excavation Planning

- **Call 811** at least two to ten full business before digging. Utility companies will mark underground lines with paint or flags.
- **Review utility maps and as-builts**, if available, but never rely solely on them, field markings are more accurate.
- **Hold a pre-job safety meeting** with your crew to review the location of fiber optic lines and excavation methods.

#### 2. **Marking and Reasonable accuracy zone (a.k.a. "tolerance zone")**

- Fiber optic lines are marked with orange paint or flags.
- Respect the reasonable accuracy twenty-four (24) inches on either side of the marked line or conduit). That means in Washington State the total tolerance zone equals forty-eight (48) inches added to the width of the buried utility.
- Within this zone, use safe work methods, e.g., hand tools or vacuum excavation.

### 3. Safe excavation techniques

- **Hand digging:** Use shovels, not picks or sharp tools, to carefully expose the line. **Vacuum excavation (hydro or air):** a safe non-destructive method to expose utilities without direct contact.

- **Dig parallel, not perpendicular:** when possible, dig alongside the utility to reduce the chance of striking it.

- **Never pry against the utility line:** fiber optic cables are fragile and can be damaged by pressure or bending.

### 4. Communications and monitoring

- Keep continuous communication with the utility locator or inspector if one is present.

- Assign a spotter to watch for markings and guide equipment operators.

- Stop working immediately and notify 811 if markings are unclear or if you encounter unmarked utilities.

### 5. Emergency preparedness

- If a fiber optic line is damaged: stop working immediately, do not attempt repairs yourself, notify the utility owner right away by calling 811. Be aware that damaged fiber can disrupt 911 services, internet, and business operations, making quick reporting critical.

### 6. Regulatory and safety compliance

- Follow OSHA excavation standards for trenching and shoring.

- Adherence to Washington state big law RCW 19.122 is mandatory.

- Document your excavation process with photos and notes in case of disputes.

#### Why it matters

- **Costly repairs:** Fiber optic fiber optic damage can cost tens of thousands of dollars per incident.

- **Service disruption:** A single cut can knockout internet, phone, and emergency services for entire communities.

- **Legal liability:** Excavators can be held financially responsible for damages if they fail to follow proper procedures.

**Enforcement of the dig law in Washington State** begins with a peer review of alleged violations of RCW 19.122 by the Washington State Dig Law Safety Committee (WSDLSC).

RCW 19.122.130(5) states any person may bring a complaint to the safety committee regarding an alleged violation occurring on or after January 1st, 2013. If you feel the violation of the state dig law has occurred, you can file a complaint with the WSDLSC. The committee, created by statutory requirement, is composed of up to 13 members representing a variety of stakeholders throughout the digging and utility industry. A list of current members of the committee may be requested by an e-mail to [wdsafetycommittee@gmail.com](mailto:wdsafetycommittee@gmail.com). The committee will hear complaints and make recommendations to the UTC for enforcement action.

### **In summary,**

-Are you concerned about excavation occurring without locates? Call 811 and request a safety ticket.

-You can also file a complaint with the Washington State Dig Law Safety Committee.

-The Safety Committee may review complaints of alleged violations of this chapter involving practices related to non-pipeline underground facilities. Any person may bring a complaint to the Safety Committee regarding an alleged violation. To file a complaint, visit [www.digsafewa.com](http://www.digsafewa.com), click "file a complaint."

-Direct questions on how to file: Program coordinator of Washington State Dig Law Safety Committee via email: [wdsafetycommittee@gmail.com](mailto:wdsafetycommittee@gmail.com)

If the complaint is against a natural gas or hazardous liquid pipeline operator there is no peer review: it goes straight to the UTC. visit [www.utc.wa.gov](http://www.utc.wa.gov) >Public Safety >Call Before You Dig >Report Damage to Underground Facility > File a Dig Law Complaint.

Sections of the dig law that were revised July 27,2025,changes shown in **yellow**. Green shown for emphasis.

### **Revised – RCW 19.122.010**

1. ...**free** locating and marking underground utilities

2. **Revised – RCW 19.122.020** (7) "Emergency" means any condition constituting a clear and present danger to life, health, or property, or a customer service outage due to an unplanned utility outage that requires immediate action where an excavator as a crew on-site or en route.

3. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(11) "Excavation confirmation code" means a code or ticket issued by a one-number locator service for the site where an excavation is planned. The code must be accompanied by the date and time it was issued and the work-to-begin date on the notice as provided in RCW 19.122.030(2). The excavation confirmation code is not valid until the work-to-begin date.
4. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(22) ...Markings shall include identification letters indicating the specific type, best known width, and identification of the operator of the underground facility...
5. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(2) "Blind boring" means engaging in directional underground boring without potholing the underground facility, relying on surface markings only to approximate the location of underground utilities in three dimensions.
6. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(6) "Design locating" means locating for planning purposes. "Design locating" does not include locating for excavation purposes.
7. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(14) "Force majeure" means: Natural disasters, including fire, flood, earthquake, windstorm, avalanche, mudslide, and other similar events; acts of war or civil unrest when an emergency has been declared by appropriate governmental officials; acts of civil or military authority; embargoes; epidemics; terrorist acts; riots; insurrections; explosions; and nuclear accidents.
8. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(16) "General contractor" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 18.27.010.
9. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(17) "Hard surface" means an area covered with asphalt, concrete, interlocking brick or block solid stone, wood, or any similar impervious or nonporous material on the surface of the ground.
10. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(26) "Physical exposure" means processes, such as potholing or daylighting.

11. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(29) "Positive response" means a notification from the owner or operator of the underground facility, or the owner's or operator's authorized locating contractor, to the one-number locator service confirming that the facility owner, operator, or contracted locator has completed marking or provided location information regarding unlocatable facilities in response to a notice.
12. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(30) "Potholing" means an excavation process that involves making a series of small test holes to accurately locate underground lines. Potholing is also known as daylighting.
13. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(32) "Safe and careful work methods" means methods of excavation, including pot holing, hand digging when practical, vacuum excavation methods, pneumatic hand tools, or other technical methods that may be developed.
14. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(39) "White lining" means the use of any white paint, flags, stakes, whiskers, or other locally accepted method that is distinguishable from the surrounding area.
15. **Revised - RCW 19.122.020**  
(40) "Work-to-begin date" means an identified date not less than two full business days and not more than 10 full business days, not including Saturdays, Sundays, legal local, state, or federal holidays, from the date notice is given to a one-number locator service.
16. **Revised - RCW 19.122.027**  
(1) The commission must establish a single statewide toll-free telephone number to be used for referring excavators to the appropriate one-number locator service. The one-number locator service shall maintain a web-based platform that provides the same services as the toll-free telephone number online. The web-based platform must meet the requirements outlined in RCW 19.122.030 (1) and (2). The web-based platform must be free of charge to those requesting location of underground facilities and operated in the same manner as the toll-free telephone number. The one-number locator service must require that an excavator provide a work-to-begin date in the notice. The one-number locator service must allow an option

for the submission of a notice that generates multiple unique and individual excavation confirmation codes in accordance with RCW 19.122.030(1). This notice option does not alter any duties, obligations, or liabilities of excavators or facility operators.

17. Revised - RCW 19.122.020  
(1)(a) Unless exempted under RCW 19.122.031, before commencing any excavation, an excavator must mark the boundary of the excavation area with white lining or, when necessary, white pin flags, paint applied on the ground of the worksite, then provide notice of the scheduled commencement of excavation to all facility operators through a one-number locator service. An excavator shall provide the work-to-begin date in the notice provided to the one-number locator service.
18. Revised - RCW 19.122.030  
(b) If boundary marking required by (a) of this subsection is infeasible, an excavator must provide notice electronically to a one-number locator service.
19. Revised - RCW 19.122.030  
(c) An excavator may use a third-party entity, including a general contractor, to provide the required notice of the scheduled commencement of excavation to all facility operators through a one-number locator service as required in this subsection. An excavator that uses a third-party entity to provide such required notice retains all legal duties and responsibilities for compliance with this chapter.
20. Revised - RCW 19.122.030  
(d) Excavators and facility operators are encouraged to incorporate best practices for underground damage prevention, improve worker safety, protect vital underground infrastructure, and ensure public safety during excavation activities conducted in the vicinity of existing underground facilities.
21. Revised - RCW 19.122.030  
(2) An excavator must provide the notice required by subsection (1) of this section to a one-number locator service not less than two full business days and not more than ten 10 full business days before the scheduled work-to-begin date, unless otherwise agreed by the excavator and facility operators in writing. ...

**22. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(3) Upon receipt of the notice provided for in subsection (1) of this section, a facility operator must, with respect to: (a)(i) The facility operator's locatable underground facilities, provide the excavator with reasonably accurate information by marking facility location. Hazardous liquid and gas pipeline operators are required to locate all facilities in accordance with Title 49 C.F.R. Secs. 195.442(c)(4) through (6) and 192.614(c)(4) through (6) as they existed on July 27, 2025, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the commission by rule, consistent with the purpose of this section. This information must be provided free of charge subject to the limitations in subsections (6)(b) and (8) of this section, and the grant of authority in subsection (11) of this section;

**23. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(ii) In the event of force majeure, the facility operator's deadline to mark underground facilities as provided in subsection (4)(a) of this section, must be extended by an agreement in writing between the affected parties. The facility operator shall notify the excavator of the need for extension of the deadline as soon as reasonable, but no later than the expiration of the deadline established in subsection (4)(a) of this section;

**24. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(b) The facility operator's unlocatable or identified but unlocatable underground facilities, provide the excavator with available information as to their location prior to the work-to-begin date provided in the notice under subsection (1) of this section. For any gas or hazardous liquid pipeline, locate all facilities...

**25. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(4)(a) A facility operator must provide information to an excavator pursuant to subsection (3) of this section no later than the work-to-begin date on the notice provided for in subsections (1) and (2) of this section, unless otherwise agreed by written agreement between the facility operator and excavator.

**26. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

**SERVICE LATERALS**

(4)(d) An end user is responsible for determining the

the location of a service lateral on their property or a service lateral that they own. An end user is responsible for locating on their own property the underground facilities that they own. The one-number locator service shall maintain a list of private-line locate service providers who may be hired at the cost of the end user for the location of service laterals. Nothing in this section may be interpreted to require an end user to subscribe to a one-number locator service or to locate a service lateral within a right-of-way or utility easement.

**27. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(5) An excavator must not excavate until all known facility operators have marked their locatable underground facilities or, in the case of nonhazardous liquid or nongas pipeline facilities, provided information regarding their unlocatable underground facilities as provided in this section. On and after January 1, 2026, an excavator may not commence excavation until the excavator has received positive response from all operators with underground facilities in the area identified in the notice.

**28. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(6)(a) Once marked by a facility operator, an excavator is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the facility operator's markings of underground facilities for the lesser of:

- (i) Forty-five calendar days from the date that the excavator provided notice to a one-number locator service pursuant to subsection (1) of this section; or
- (ii) The duration of the excavation portion of the project.

**29. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(10) If an excavator discovers underground facilities that are not identified, the excavator must cease excavating in the vicinity of the underground facilities and immediately notify the facility operator through a one-number locator service. If an excavator discovers identified but unlocatable underground facilities, the excavator must notify the facility operator through a one-number locator service. Upon notification by a one-number locator service or an excavator, a facility operator must allow for location of the uncovered portion of an underground facility

identified by the excavator, and may accept location information from the excavator for marking of the underground facility.

**30. Revised - RCW 19.122.030 (10)**

IF YOU FIND A BURIED LINE THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LOCATED—STOP AND CALL 811.

IF YOU CAN'T FIND A LINE THAT WAS MARKED (THAT IS IN YOUR PATH) BUT YOU WERE NOT ABLE TO DETERMINE THE PRECISE LOCATION---STOP AND CALL 811

**31. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(11) Each facility operator shall provide to a one-number locator service directions on how a requestor may obtain, for design locating, information regarding the location of underground facilities. For the purpose of this subsection, a "requestor" is any person seeking the location of underground facilities for design locating. Facility operators may attach fees for design locating. However, the fees under this subsection may not be imposed on the department of transportation

**32. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(12) Design locating is required whenever any individual applies for a development permit of any type within 700 feet of a transmission pipeline.

(a) Prior to any activity that involves grade modification, excavation, or additional loading of the soil on property within 700 feet of a transmission pipeline, the requestor must contact the transmission pipeline operator and provide documentation detailing the proposed activity.

(b) The transmission pipeline operator must respond to the requestor within 30 days to confirm a review of the documents describing the proposed activity and indicate any potential impacts from the activity on the transmission line.

(c) If after 30 days, the transmission pipeline operator does not respond to the requestor, then development activity may resume without violation.

**33. Revised - RCW 19.122.030**

(13) Except as provided in subsections (6)(b), (8), and (11) of this section, facility operators are prohibited from charging a fee for locating and marking their underground facilities.

(14) Nothing in this section limits a facility

operator regulated by the commission from seeking recovery of costs for locating and marking its underground facilities as part of rates.

**34. Revised - RCW 19.122.031**

(1)(a) An emergency excavation, but only with respect to white lining and notice requirements specified in RCW 19.122.030 (1) and (2), and provided that the excavator provides notice to a one-number locator service at the earliest practicable opportunity. Facility operators must promptly respond to a notice of emergency excavation. Prompt means to dispatch locating personnel without undue delay;

**35. Revised - RCW 19.122.031**

(h) Any facility operator using safe and careful work methods to physically expose an unlocatable facility in response to a one-call notification

**36. Revised - RCW 19.122.040**

(2) An excavator shall use reasonable care to avoid damaging underground facilities. An excavator must: (a) Determine the precise location of underground facilities which have been marked pursuant to RCW 19.122.030;

**37. Revised - RCW 19.122.040**

(d) Use safe and careful work methods, taking into consideration the known and unknown underground facilities and the surface and subsurface to be excavated. If the marking is on a hard surface, methods of excavation may include pneumatic hand tools or other excavation methods that are commonly accepted as permissible for the type of surface encountered; and

(e) When directional boring will be implemented as a method of underground excavation, supplement white lining with physical exposure to avoid blind boring.

"Blind boring" means engaging in directional underground boring without potholing the underground facility, relying on surface markings only to approximate the location of underground utilities in three dimensions.

"Physical exposure" means processes, such as potholing or daylighting.

"Potholing" means an excavation process that involves making a series of small test holes to accurately locate underground lines. Potholing is also known as daylighting.

**38. Revised - RCW 19.122.020**

(14) "Force majeure" means: Natural disasters, including fire, flood, earthquake, windstorm, avalanche, mudslide, and other similar events; acts of war or civil unrest when an emergency has been declared by appropriate governmental officials; acts of civil or military authority; embargoes; epidemics; terrorist acts; riots; insurrections; explosions; and nuclear accidents.

In the event of force majeure, the facility operator's deadline to mark underground facilities as provided in subsection of this section, must be extended by an agreement in writing between the affected parties. The facility operator shall notify the excavator of the need for extension of the deadline as soon as reasonable, but no later than the expiration of the deadline ...

**The following sections ONLY apply to natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines.**

**39. Revised - RCW 19.122.055**

(1)(a) Any excavator violates any provision of this chapter and causes damage to a hazardous liquid or gas underground facility is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each violation.

(2) Any hazardous liquid or gas pipeline operator who (a): (i) Fails to accurately locate the underground facility as required under RCW 19.122.030 (3) and (4); or (ii) fails to mark its

underground facilities as required under RCW 19.122.030(1), and (b) whose underground facility is damaged as a result of the failure in (a) of this subsection is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each violation.

(3) A civil penalty of up to \$5,000 for each violation may be imposed on any excavator or facility operator that violates any provision of this chapter involving an underground pipeline facility but does not cause damage to an underground pipeline facility.

All civil penalties recovered under this section must be deposited into the damage prevention account created in RCW 19.122.160.

## Chapter 19.122 RCW

### UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

#### Sections

- 19.122.010 Intent.
- 19.122.020 Definitions.
- 19.122.027 One - number locator services—Single statewide toll - free telephone number - Web-based platform.
- 19.122.030 Excavator and facility operator duties before excavation.
- 19.122.031 Exempted activities.
- 19.122.033 Notice of excavation to pipeline companies.
- 19.122.035 Pipeline company duties after notice of excavation—Examination—Information of damage—Notification of local first responders.
- 19.122.040 Underground facilities identified in bid or contract—Excavator's duty of reasonable care—Liability for damages—Attorneys' fees.
- 19.122.045 Exemption from liability.
- 19.122.050 Damage to underground facility—Notification by excavator—Repairs or relocation of facility.
- 19.122.053 Report of damage to underground facility.
- 19.122.055 Damage to hazardous liquid or gas underground facilities - Civil penalty.
- 19.122.070 Civil penalties—Treble damages—Existing remedies not affected.

- 19.122.075** Damage or removal of permanent marking  
—Civil penalty.
- 19.122.080** Waiver of notification and marking requirements
- 19.122.090** Excavation without a valid excavation confirmation code—Penalty.
- 19.122.100** Violation of RCW **19.122.090**  
—Affirmative defense.
- 19.122.110** False excavation confirmation code  
—Penalty
- 19.122.120** One-number locator service to provide excavation confirmation code.
- 19.122.130** Commission to contract with nonprofit entity  
—Safety committee—Review of violations of chapter.
- 19.122.140** Commission authority—Receipt of notification of violation of chapter—Referral to attorney general.
- 19.122.150** Commission authority—Violations of chapter—Imposition of penalties.
- 19.122.160** Damage prevention account.
- 19.122.170** Damage prevention account—Use of funds.
- 19.122.180** Damage prevention account—Deposit of penalties.
- 19.122.901** Short title—2011 c 263.

## **RCW 19.122.010**

### **Intent.**

In this chapter, the underground utility damage prevention act, the legislature intends to protect public health and safety and prevent disruption of vital utility services through a comprehensive damage prevention program that includes:

- (1) Assigning responsibility for providing notice of proposed excavation, free locating and marking underground utilities, and reporting and repairing damage.
- (2) Setting safeguards for construction and excavation near hazardous liquid and gas pipelines.
- (3) Improving worker safety and public knowledge of safe practices:
- (4) Collecting and analyzing damage data:
- (5) Reviewing alleged violations: and
- (6) Enforcing this chapter.

[ [2025 c 292 s 1](#): [2011 c 263 s 1](#): [1984 c 144 s 1](#).]

### **NOTES:**

**Report—2011 c 263:** "By December 1, 2015, the utilities and transportation commission must report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on the effectiveness of the damage prevention program established under chapter [19.122](#) RCW. The legislative report required under this section must include analysis of damage data reported under section 20 of this act." [ [2011 c 263 s 26](#).]

**Effective date—2012 c 96: 2011 c 263:** "Except for section 18 of this act (chapter 263, Laws of 2011), this act takes effect January 1, 2013." [ [2012 c 96 s 2](#): [2011 c 263 s 27](#).]

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## **RCW 19.122.020**

### **Definitions.**

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) "Bar hole" means a hole made in the soil or pavement with a hand-operated bar for the specific purpose of testing the subsurface atmosphere with a combustible gas indicator.

- (2) "Blind boring" means engaging in directional underground boring without potholing the underground facility, relying on surface markings only to approximate the location of underground utilities in three dimensions.
- (3) "Business day" means any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a legal local, state, or federal holiday.
- (4) "Commission" means the utilities and transportation commission.
- (5) "Damage" includes the substantial weakening of structural or lateral support of an underground facility, penetration, impairment, or destruction of any underground protective coating, housing, or other protective device, or the severance, partial or complete, of any underground facility to the extent that the project owner or the affected facility operator determines that repairs are required.
- (6) "Design locating" means locating for planning purposes. "Design locating" does not include locating for excavation purposes.
- (7) "Emergency" means any condition constituting a clear and present danger to life, health, or property, or a customer service outage due to an unplanned utility outage that requires immediate action where an excavator or facility operator has a crew on-site or in route.
- (8) "End user" means any utility customer or consumer of utility services or commodities provided by a facility operator.
- (9) "Equipment operator" means an individual conducting an excavation.
- (10) "Excavation" and "excavate" means any operation, including the installation of signs, in which earth, rock, or other material on or below the ground is moved or otherwise displaced by any means.
- (11) "Excavation confirmation code" means a code or ticket issued by a one-number locator service for the site where an excavation is planned. The code must be accompanied by the date and time it was issued and the work-to-begin date on the notice as provided in RCW [19.122.030](#)(2). The excavation confirmation code is not valid until the work-to-begin date.
- (12) "Excavator" means any person who engages

(13) "Facility operator" means any person who owns an underground facility or is in the business of supplying any utility service or commodity for compensation. "Facility operator" does not include a utility customer who owns a service lateral that terminates at a facility operator's main utility line.

(14) "Force majeure" means: Natural disasters, including fire, flood, earthquake, windstorm, avalanche, mudslide, and other similar events: acts of war or civil unrest when an emergency has been declared by appropriate governmental officials: acts of civil or military authority: embargoes: epidemics: terrorist acts: riots: insurrections: explosions: and nuclear accidents.

(15) "Gas" means natural gas, flammable gas, or toxic or corrosive gas.

(16) "General contractor" has the same meaning as defined in RCW [18.27.010](#).

(17) "Hard surface" means an area covered with asphalt, concrete, interlocking brick or block solid stone, wood, or any similar impervious or nonporous material on the surface of the ground.

(18) "Hazardous liquid" means:

(a) Petroleum, petroleum products, or anhydrous ammonia as those terms are defined in 49 C.F.R. Part 195 as in effect on March 1, 1998:

(b) Carbon dioxide: and

(c) Other substances designated as hazardous by the secretary of transportation and incorporated by reference by the commission by rule.

(19) "Identified but unlocatable underground facility" means an underground facility which has been identified but cannot be located with reasonable accuracy.

(20) "Large project" means a project that exceeds seven hundred linear feet.

(21) "Locatable underground facility" means an underground facility which can be marked with reasonable accuracy.

(22) "Marking" means the use of stakes, paint, or other clearly identifiable materials to show the field location of underground facilities, in accordance with the

current color code standard of the American public works association. Markings shall include identification letters indicating the specific type, best known width, and identification of the operator of the underground facility. Locate marks are not required to indicate the depth of the underground facility given the potential change of topography over time.

(23) "Notice" or "notify" means contact in person or by telephone or other electronic method, and, with respect to contact of a one-number locator service, also results in the receipt of an excavation confirmation code.

(24) "One-number locator service" means a service through which a person can notify facility operators and request marking of underground facilities and includes the web-based platform required under RCW [19.122.027](#)(1).

(25) "Person" means an individual, partnership, franchise holder, association, corporation, the state, a city, a county, a town, or any subdivision or instrumentality of the state, including any unit of local government, and its employees, agents, or legal representatives.

(26) "Physical exposure" means processes, such as potholing or daylighting.

(27) "Pipeline" or "pipeline system" means all or parts of a pipeline facility through which hazardous liquid or gas moves in transportation, including, but not limited to, line pipe, valves, and other appurtenances connected to line pipe, pumping units, fabricated assemblies associated with pumping or compressor units, metering and delivery stations and fabricated assemblies therein, and breakout tanks. "Pipeline" or "pipeline system" does not include process or transfer pipelines.

(28) "Pipeline company" means a person or entity constructing, owning, or operating a pipeline for transporting hazardous liquid or gas. "Pipeline company" does not include:

(a) Distribution systems owned and operated under franchise for the sale, delivery, or distribution of natural gas at retail: or

(b) Excavation contractors or other contractors that contract with a pipeline company.

- (29) "Positive response" means a notification from the owner or operator of the underground facility, or the owner's or operator's authorized locating contractor, to the one-number locator service confirming that the facility owner, operator, or contracted locator has completed marking or provided location information regarding unlocatable facilities in response to a notice.
- (30) "Potholing" means an excavation process that involves making a series of small test holes to accurately locate underground lines. Potholing is also known as daylighting.
- (31) "Reasonable accuracy" means location within twenty-four inches of the outside dimensions of both sides of an underground facility.
- (32) "Safe and careful work methods" means methods of excavation, including potholing, hand digging when practical, vacuum excavation methods, pneumatic hand tools, or other technical methods that may be developed.
- (33) "Service lateral" means an underground water, stormwater, or sewer facility located in a public right-of-way or utility easement that connects an end user's building or property to a facility operator's underground facility, and terminates beyond the public right-of-way or utility easement.
- (34) "Transfer pipeline" means a buried or aboveground pipeline used to carry hazardous liquid between a tank vessel or transmission pipeline and the first valve inside secondary containment at a facility, provided that any discharge on the facility side of the first valve will not directly impact waters of the state. "Transfer pipeline" includes valves and other appurtenances connected to the pipeline, pumping units, and fabricated assemblies associated with pumping units. "Transfer pipeline" does not include process pipelines, pipelines carrying ballast or bilge water, transmission pipelines, or tank vessel or storage tanks.
- (35) "Transmission pipeline" means a pipeline that transports hazardous liquid or gas within a storage field or transports hazardous liquid or gas from an interstate pipeline or storage facility to a distribution main or a large volume hazardous liquid or gas user, or operates at a hoop stress of twenty percent or more of the specified minimum yield strength.
- (36) "Underground facility" means any item buried or placed below ground for use in connection with the

storage or conveyance of water, sewage, electronic, telephonic or telegraphic communications, cablevision, electric energy, petroleum products, gas, gaseous vapors, hazardous liquids, or other substances and including but not limited to pipes, sewers, conduits, cables, valves, lines, wires, manholes, attachments, and those parts of poles or anchors that are below ground. This definition does not include pipelines as defined in subsection (27) of this section but does include distribution systems owned and operated under franchise for the sale, delivery, or distribution of natural gas at retail.

(37) "Unlocatable underground facility" means, subject to the provisions of RCW [19.122.030](#), an underground facility that cannot be marked with reasonable accuracy using available information to designate the location of an underground facility. "Unlocatable underground facility" includes, but is not limited to, service laterals, storm drains, and nonconductive and nonmetallic underground facilities that do not contain trace wires.

(38) "Utility easement" means a right held by a facility operator to install, maintain, and access an underground facility or pipeline.

(39) "White lining" means the use of any white paint, flags, stakes, whiskers, or other locally accepted method that is distinguishable from the surrounding area.

(40) "Work-to-begin date" means an identified date not less than two full business days and not more than 10 full business days, not including Saturdays, Sundays, [or] legal local, state, or federal holidays, from the date notice is given to a one-number locator service.

[ [2025 c 292 s 2](#); [2020 c 162 s 1](#). Prior: [2011 c 263 s 2](#); [2007 c 142 s 9](#); [2005 c 448 s 1](#); [2000 c 191 s 15](#); [144 s 2](#).]

## NOTES:

**Reviser's note:** The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW [1.08.015](#)(2)(k).

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#)

## **RCW [19.122.027](#)**

### **One-number locator services—Single statewide toll-free telephone number—Web-based platform.**

(1) The commission must establish a single statewide toll-free telephone number to be used for referring excavators to the appropriate one-number locator service. The one-number locator service shall maintain a web-based platform that provides the same services as the toll-free telephone number online. The web-based platform must meet the requirements outlined in RCW [19.122.030](#) (1) and (2). The web-based platform must be free of charge to those requesting location of underground facilities and operated in the same manner as the toll-free telephone number. The one-number locator service must require that an excavator provide a work-to-begin date in the notice. The one-number locator service must allow an option for the submission of a notice that generates multiple unique and individual excavation confirmation codes in accordance with RCW [19.122.030](#)(1). This notice option does not alter any duties, obligations, or liabilities of excavators or facility operators.

(2) The commission, in consultation with the entity administering the one-number locator service, must establish minimum standards and best management practices for one-number locator services.

(3) One-number locator services must be operated by non-governmental agencies.

(4) All facility operators within a one-number locator service area must subscribe to the service.

(5) Failure to subscribe to a one-number locator service constitutes willful intent to avoid compliance with this chapter.

[ [2025 c 292 s 3](#): [2011 c 263 s 3](#): [2005 c 448 s 2](#): [2000 c 191 s 16](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW 19.122.010.

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

## **RCW 19.122.030**

### **Excavator and facility operator duties before excavation.**

(1)(a) Unless exempted under RCW 19.122.031, before commencing any excavation, an excavator must mark the boundary of the excavation area with white lining or, when necessary, white pin flags, applied on the ground of the worksite, then provide notice of the scheduled commencement of excavation to all facility operators through a one-number locator service. An excavator shall provide the work-to-begin date in the notice provided to the one-number locator service.

(b) If boundary marking required by (a) of this subsection is infeasible, an excavator must provide notice electronically to a one-number locator service.

(c) An excavator may use a third-party entity, including a general contractor, to provide the required notice of the scheduled commencement of excavation to all facility operators through a one-number locator service as required in this subsection. An excavator that uses a third-party entity to provide such required notice retains all legal duties and responsibilities for compliance with this chapter.

(d) Excavators and facility operators are encouraged to incorporate best practices for underground damage prevention, improve worker safety, protect vital underground infrastructure, and ensure public safety during excavation activities conducted in the vicinity of existing underground facilities.

(2) An excavator must provide the notice required by subsection (1) of this section to a one-number locator service not less than two full business days and not more than 10 full business days before the scheduled work-to-begin date, unless otherwise agreed by the excavator and facility operators in writing. If an excavator intends to work at multiple sites or at a large project, the excavator must take reasonable steps to confer with facility operators to enable them to locate underground facilities reasonably in advance of the start of excavation for each phase of the work

(3) Upon receipt of the notice provided for in subsection (1) of this section, a facility operator must, with respect to:

(a)(i) The facility operator's locatable underground facilities, provide the excavator with reasonably accurate information by marking facility location. Hazardous liquid and gas pipeline operators are required to locate all facilities in accordance with Title 49 C.F.R. Secs. 195.442(c)(4) through (6) and 192.614(c)(4) through (6) as they existed on July 27, 2025, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the commission by rule, consistent with the purpose of this section. This information must be provided free of charge subject to the limitations in subsections (6)(b) and (8) of this section, and the grant of authority in subsection (11) of this section:

(ii) In the event of force majeure, the facility operator's deadline to mark underground facilities as provided in subsection (4)(a) of this section, must be extended by an agreement in writing between the affected parties. The facility operator shall notify the excavator of the need for extension of the deadline as soon as reasonable, but no later than the expiration of the deadline established in subsection (4)(a) of this section:

(b) The facility operator's unlocatable or identified but unlocatable underground facilities, provide the excavator with available information as to their location prior to the work-to-begin date provided in the notice under subsection (1) of this section. For any gas or hazardous liquid pipeline, locate all facilities in accordance with Title 49 C.F.R. Secs. 195.442(c)(4) through (6) and 192.614(c)(4) through (6) as they existed on July 27, 2025, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the commission by rule, consistent with the purpose of this section: and

(c) Service laterals, designate their presence or location, if the service laterals:

(i) Connect end users to the facility operator's main utility line: and (ii) Are within a public right-of-way or utility easement and the boundary of the excavation area identified under subsection (1) of this section.

(4)(a) A facility operator must provide information to an excavator pursuant to subsection (3) of this section no later than the work-to-begin date on the notice provided for in subsections (1) and (2) of this section,

unless otherwise agreed by written agreement between the facility operator and excavator.

(b) A facility operator complying with subsection (3)(b) and (c) of this section may do so in a manner that includes any of the following methods:

(i) Placing within a proposed excavation area a triangular mark at the main utility line pointing at the building, structure, or property in question, indicating the presence of an unlocatable or identified but unlocatable underground facility, including a service lateral:

(ii) Arranging to meet an excavator at a worksite to provide available information about the location of service laterals: or

(iii) Providing copies of the best reasonably available records by electronic message, mail, facsimile, or other delivery method.

(c) A facility operator's good faith attempt to comply with subsection (3)(b) and (c) of this section:

(i) Constitutes full compliance with the requirements of this section, and no person may be found liable for damages or injuries that may result from such compliance, apart from liability for arranging for repairs or relocation as provided in RCW [19.122.050](#)(2); and

(ii) Does not constitute any assertion of ownership or operation of a service lateral by the facility operator.

(d) An end user is responsible for determining the location of a service lateral on their property or a service lateral that they own. An end user is responsible for locating on their own property the underground facilities that they own. The one-number locator service shall maintain a list of private-line locate service providers who may be hired at the cost of the end user for the location of service laterals. Nothing in this section may be interpreted to require an end user to subscribe to a one-number locator service or to locate a service lateral within a right-of-way or utility easement.

(e) Facility operators may direct the one-number locator service to send notices provided for in subsection (1) of this section to a contract locator. The facility operator retains all legal responsibility for compliance with this section.

(5) An excavator must not excavate until all known facility operators have marked their locatable underground facilities or, in the case of nonhazardous liquid or non-gas pipeline facilities, provided information regarding their unlocatable underground facilities as provided in this section. On and after January 1, 2026, an excavator may not commence excavation until the excavator has received positive response from all operators with underground facilities in the area identified in the notice.

(6)(a) Once marked by a facility operator, an excavator is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the facility operator's markings of underground facilities for the lesser of:

(i) Forty-five calendar days from the date that the excavator provided notice to a one-number locator service pursuant to subsection (1) of this section: or

(ii) The duration of the excavation portion of the project.

(b) An excavator that makes repeated requests for location of underground facilities due to its failure to maintain the accuracy of a facility operator's markings as required by this subsection (6) may be charged by the facility operator for services provided.

(c) A facility operator's markings of underground utilities expire forty-five calendar days from the date that the excavator provided notice to a one-number locator service pursuant to subsection (1) of this section. For excavation occurring after that date, an excavator must provide additional notice to a one-number locator service pursuant to subsection (1) of this section.

(7) An excavator has the right to receive reasonable compensation from a facility operator for costs incurred by the excavator if the facility operator does not locate its underground facilities in accordance with the requirements specified in this section.

(8) A facility operator has the right to receive reasonable compensation from an excavator for costs incurred by the facility operator if the excavator does not comply with the requirements specified in this section.

(9) A facility operator is not required to comply with subsection (4) of this section with respect to service laterals conveying only water if their presence can be determined from other visible water facilities, such as water meters, water valve covers, and junction boxes in or adjacent to the boundary of an excavation area identified under subsection (1) of this section.

(10) If an excavator discovers underground facilities that are not identified, the excavator must cease excavating in the vicinity of the underground facilities and immediately notify the facility operator through a one-number locator service. If an excavator discovers identified but unlocatable underground facilities, the excavator must notify the facility operator through a one-number locator service. Upon notification by a one-number locator service or an excavator, a facility operator must allow for location of the uncovered portion of an underground facility identified by the excavator, and may accept location information from the excavator for marking of the underground facility.

(11) Each facility operator shall provide to a one-number locator service directions on how a requestor may obtain, for design locating, information regarding the location of underground facilities. For the purpose of this subsection, a "requestor" is any person seeking the location of underground facilities for design locating. Facility operators may attach fees for design locating. However, the fees under this subsection may not be imposed on the department of transportation.

(12) Design locating is required whenever any individual applies for a development permit of any type within 700 feet of a transmission pipeline.

(a) Prior to any activity that involves grade modification, excavation, or additional loading of the soil on property within 700 feet of a transmission pipeline, the requestor must contact the transmission pipeline operator and provide documentation detailing the proposed activity.

(b) The transmission pipeline operator must respond to the requestor within 30 days to confirm a review of the documents describing the proposed activity and indicate any potential impacts from the activity on the transmission line.

(c) If after 30 days, the transmission pipeline operator does not respond to the requestor, then development activity may resume without violation.

(13) Except as provided in subsections (6)(b), (8), and (11) of this section, facility operators are prohibited from charging a fee for locating and marking their underground facilities.

(14) Nothing in this section limits a facility operator regulated by the commission from seeking recovery of costs for locating and marking its underground facilities as part of rates.

[ [2025 c 292 s 4](#): [2011 c 263 s 4](#): [2000 c 191 s 17](#): [1988 c 99 s 1](#): [1984 c 144 s 3](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW 19.122.010.

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

*Damages to facilities on state highways: RCW [47.44.150](#).*

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### **RCW [19.122.031](#)**

#### **Exempted activities.**

(1) The requirements specified in RCW [19.122.030](#) do not apply to any of the following activities:

(a) An emergency excavation, but only with respect to white lining and notice requirements specified in RCW [19.122.030](#) (1) and (2), and provided that the excavator provides notice to a one-number locator service at the earliest practicable opportunity. Facility operators must promptly respond to a notice of emergency excavation. Prompt means to dispatch locating personnel without undue delay:

(b) An excavation of less than twelve inches in depth on private noncommercial property, if the excavation is performed by the person or an employee of the person who owns or occupies the property on which the excavation is being performed:

(c) The tilling of soil for agricultural purposes less than:  
(i) Twelve inches in depth within a utility easement; and  
(ii) Twenty inches in depth outside of a utility easement:

(d) The replacement of an official traffic sign installed prior to January 1, 2013, no deeper than the depth at which it was installed:

(e) Road maintenance activities involving excavation less than six inches in depth below the original road grade and ditch maintenance activities involving excavation less than six inches in depth below the original ditch flowline, or alteration of the original ditch horizontal alignment.

(f) The creation of bar holes less than twelve inches in depth, or of any depth during emergency leak investigations, provided that the excavator takes reasonable measures to eliminate electrical arc hazards.

(g) Construction, operation, or maintenance activities by an irrigation district on rights-of-way, easements, or facilities owned by the federal bureau of reclamation in federal reclamation projects: or

(h) Any facility operator using safe and careful work methods to physically expose an unlocatable facility in response to a one-call notification.

(2) Any activity described in subsection (1) of this section is subject to the requirements specified in RCW [19.122.050](#).

[ [2025 c 292 s 5](#); [2011 c 263 s 5](#).]

## NOTES:

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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### RCW [19.122.033](#)

Notice of excavation to pipeline companies.

(1) Before commencing any excavation, an excavator must notify pipeline companies of the scheduled commencement of excavation through a one-number locator service in the same manner as required for notifying facility operators of excavation under RCW [19.122.030](#). Pipeline companies have the same rights and responsibilities as facility operators under RCW [19.122.030](#) regarding excavation. Excavators have the same rights and responsibilities under this section as they have under RCW [19.122.030](#).

(2) Project owners, excavators, and pipeline companies

have the same rights and responsibilities relating to excavation near pipelines that they have for excavation near underground facilities as provided in RCW [19.122.040](#).

(3) The state, and any subdivision or instrumentality of the state, including any unit of local government, must, when planning construction or excavation within one hundred feet, or greater distance if required by local ordinance, of a right-of-way or utility easement containing a transmission pipeline, notify the pipeline company of the scheduled commencement of work.

(4) Any unit of local government that issues permits under codes adopted pursuant to chapter [19.27](#) RCW must, when permitting construction or excavation within one hundred feet, or greater distance if required by local ordinance, of a right-of-way or utility easement containing a transmission pipeline:

(a) Notify the pipeline company of the permitted activity when it issues the permit: or

(b) Require, as a condition of issuing the permit, that the applicant consult with the pipeline company.

(5) The commission must assist local governments in obtaining hazardous liquid and gas pipeline location information and maps, as provided in RCW [81.88.080](#).

[ [2011 c 263 s 6](#); [2000 c 191 s 18](#). ]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

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#### **RCW [19.122.035](#)**

**Pipeline company duties after notice of excavation—Examination—Information of damage—Notification of local first responders.**

(1) After a pipeline company has been notified by an excavator pursuant to RCW [19.122.033](#) that excavation will uncover any portion of the pipeline company's pipeline, the pipeline company shall ensure that the pipeline section in the vicinity of the excavation is examined for damage prior to being reburied.

(2) Immediately upon receiving information of third-

-party damage to a hazardous liquid pipeline, the company that operates the pipeline shall terminate the flow of hazardous liquid in that pipeline until it has visually inspected the pipeline. After visual inspection, the pipeline company shall determine whether the damaged pipeline section should be replaced or repaired, or whether it is safe to resume pipeline operation. Immediately upon receiving information of third-party damage to a gas pipeline, the pipeline company shall conduct a visual inspection of the pipeline to determine whether the flow of gas through that pipeline should be terminated, and whether the damaged pipeline should be replaced or repaired. A record of the pipeline company's inspection report and test results shall be provided to the commission, consistent with reporting requirements under 49 C.F.R. Parts 191 and 195, Subpart B.

(3) Pipeline companies shall immediately notify local first responders and the department of ecology of any reportable release of a hazardous liquid from a pipeline. Pipeline companies shall immediately notify local first responders and the commission of any blowing gas leak from a gas pipeline that has ignited or represents a probable hazard to persons or property. Pipeline companies shall take all appropriate steps to ensure the public safety in the event of a release of hazardous liquid or gas under this subsection.

(4) No damaged pipeline may be buried until it is repaired or relocated. The pipeline company shall arrange for repairs or relocation of a damaged pipeline as soon as is practical or may permit the excavator to do necessary repairs or relocation at a mutually acceptable price.

[ [2011 c 263 s 7](#); [2000 c 191 s 19](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

## **RCW 19.122.040**

### **Underground facilities identified in bid or contract—Excavator's duty of reasonable care—Liability for damages—Attorneys' fees.**

(1) Project owners shall indicate in bid or contract documents the existence of underground facilities known by the project owner to be located within the proposed area of excavation. The following are deemed to be changed or differing site conditions:

- (a) An underground facility not identified as required by this chapter or other provision of law: or
- (b) An underground facility not located, as required by this chapter or other provision of law, by the project owner, facility operator, or excavator if the project owner or excavator is also a facility operator.

(2) An excavator shall use reasonable care to avoid damaging underground facilities. An excavator must:

- (a) Determine the precise location of underground facilities which have been marked pursuant to RCW

#### **19.122.030:**

- (b) Plan the excavation to avoid damage to or minimize interference with underground facilities in and near the excavation area:

- (c) Provide such support for underground facilities in and near the construction area, including during backfill operations, as may be reasonably necessary for the protection of such facilities:

- (d) Use safe and careful work methods, taking into consideration the known and unknown underground facilities and the surface and subsurface to be excavated. If the marking is on a hard surface, methods of excavation may include pneumatic hand tools or other excavation methods that are commonly accepted as permissible for the type of surface encountered: and

- (e) When directional boring will be implemented as a method of underground excavation, supplement white lining with physical exposure to avoid blind boring.

(3) If an underground facility is damaged and such damage is the consequence of the failure to fulfill an obligation under this chapter, the party failing to perform that obligation is liable for any damages. Any clause in an excavation contract which attempts to allocate liability or requires indemnification to shift

the economic consequences of liability, that differs from the provisions of this chapter is against public policy and unenforceable. Nothing in this chapter prevents the parties to an excavation contract from contracting with respect to the allocation of risk for changed or differing site conditions.

(4) In any action brought under this section, the prevailing party is entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees. [ [2025 c 292 s 6](#); [2011 c 263 s 8](#); [1984 c 144 s 4](#).]

## NOTES:

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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### RCW [19.122.045](#)

#### **Exemption from liability.**

Excavators who comply with the requirements of this chapter are not liable for any damages arising from contact or damage to an underground fiber optics facility other than the cost to repair the facility.

[ [1988 c 99 s 2](#).]

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### RCW [19.122.050](#)

#### **Damage to underground facility—Notification by excavator—Repairs or relocation of facility.**

(1) An excavator who, in the course of excavation, contacts or damages an underground facility shall notify the facility operator directly, if the facility operator is known, and a one-number locator service, and report the damage as required under RCW [19.122.053](#). If the damage causes an emergency condition, the excavator causing the damage shall also call 911 to alert the appropriate local public safety agencies and take all appropriate steps to ensure public safety. No damaged underground facility may be buried until it is repaired or relocated.

(2) A facility operator notified in accordance with subsection (1) of this section shall arrange for repairs or relocation as soon as is practical or permit the excavator to do necessary repairs or relocation at a mutually acceptable price.

[ [2025 c 292 s 7](#); [2020 c 162 s 2](#); [2011 c 263 s 9](#); [1984 c 144 s 5](#).]

## **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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### **RCW [19.122.053](#)**

#### **Report of damage to underground facility.**

(1) Facility operators and excavators who observe or cause damage to an underground facility must report the damage event to the commission.

(2) A non-pipeline facility operator conducting an excavation, or a subcontractor conducting an excavation on the facility operator's behalf, that strikes the facility operator's own underground facility is not required to report that damage event to the commission.

(3) Reports must be made to the commission's office of pipeline safety within forty-five days of the damage event, or sooner if required by law, using the commission's virtual private damage information reporting tool (DIRT) report form, or other similar form if it reports:

(a) The name of the person submitting the report and whether the person is an excavator, a representative of a one-number locator service, or a facility operator.

(b) The date and time of the damage event.

(c) The address where the damage event occurred:

(d) The type of right-of-way, where the damage event occurred, including but not limited to city street, state highway, or utility easement.

(e) The type of underground facility damaged, including but not limited to pipes, transmission pipelines, distribution lines, sewers, conduits, cables, valves, lines, wires, manholes, attachments, or parts of poles or anchors below ground.

(f) The type of utility service or commodity the underground facility stores or conveys, including but not limited to electronic, telephonic or telegraphic communications, water, sewage, cablevision, electric energy, petroleum products, gas, gaseous vapors, hazardous liquids, or other substances.

(g) The type of excavator involved, including but not limited to contractors or facility operators.

(h) The excavation equipment used, including but not limited to augers, bulldozers, backhoes, or hand tools:

(i) The type of excavation being performed, including but not limited to drainage, grading, or landscaping.

(j) Whether a one-number locator service was notified before excavation commenced, and, if so, the excavation confirmation code provided by a one-number locator service.

(k) If applicable:

(i) The person who located the underground facility, and their employer.

(ii) Whether underground facility marks were visible in the proposed excavation area before excavation commenced.

(iii) Whether underground facilities were marked correctly.

(l) Whether an excavator experienced interruption of work as a result of the damage event.

(m) A description of the damage: and

(n) Whether the damage caused an interruption of underground facility service.

(4) The commission must use reported data to evaluate the effectiveness of the damage prevention program.

[ [2011 c 263 s 20.](#)]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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#### **RCW [19.122.055](#)**

#### **Damage to hazardous liquid or gas underground facilities—Civil penalty.**

(1)(a) Any excavator who violates any provision of this chapter and causes damage to a hazardous liquid or gas underground facility is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each violation.

(b) The civil penalty in this subsection may also be imposed on any excavator who violates RCW [19.122.090](#).

(2) Any hazardous liquid or gas pipeline operator who (a): (i) Fails to accurately locate the underground facility as required under RCW [19.122.030](#) (3) and (4): or (ii) fails to mark its underground facilities as required under RCW [19.122.030](#)(1), and (b) whose underground facility is damaged as a result of the failure in (a) of this subsection is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each violation.

(3) A civil penalty of up to \$5,000 for each violation may be imposed on any excavator or facility operator that violates any provision of this chapter involving an underground pipeline facility, but does not cause

damage to an underground pipeline facility.

(4) All civil penalties recovered under this section must be deposited into the damage prevention account created in RCW [19.122.160](#).

[ [2025 c 292 s 8](#); [2011 c 263 s 10](#); [2005 c 448 s 3](#); [2001 c 238 s 5](#); [2000 c 191 s 24](#).]

#### NOTES:

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

**Intent—Finding—Effective date—2001 c 238:** See notes following RCW [80.24.060](#).

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

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#### RCW [19.122.070](#)

**Civil penalties—Treble damages—Existing remedies not affected.**

(1) Any person who violates any provision of this chapter not amounting to a violation of RCW [19.122.055](#) is subject to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars for an initial violation, and not more than five thousand dollars for each subsequent violation within a three-year period. All penalties recovered in such actions must be deposited in the damage prevention account created in RCW [19.122.160](#).

(2) Any excavator who willfully or maliciously damages a marked underground facility is liable for treble the costs incurred in repairing or relocating the facility. In those cases, in which an excavator fails to notify known facility operators or a one-number locator service, any damage to the underground facility is deemed willful and malicious and is subject to treble damages for costs incurred in repairing or relocating the facility.

(3) This chapter does not affect any civil remedies for personal injury or for property damage, including that to underground facilities, nor does this chapter create any new civil remedies for such damage.

[ [2011 c 263 s 11](#); [2005 c 448 s 4](#); [1984 c 144 s 7](#).]

#### NOTES:

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

*Damages to facilities on state highways:* RCW [47.44.150](#).

## **RCW [19.122.075](#)**

### **Damage or removal of permanent marking—Civil penalty.**

Any person who willfully damages or removes a permanent marking used to identify an underground facility or pipeline, or a temporary marking prior to its intended use, is subject to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars for an initial violation, and not more than five thousand dollars for each subsequent violation within a three-year period.

[ [2011 c 263 s 14](#); [2000 c 191 s 23](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

**Intent—Findings—Conflict with federal requirements—Short title—Effective date—2000 c 191:** See RCW [81.88.005](#) and [81.88.900](#) through [81.88.902](#).

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## **RCW [19.122.080](#)**

### **Waiver of notification and marking requirements.**

The notification and marking provisions of this chapter may be waived for one or more designated persons by a facility operator with respect to all or part of that facility operator's underground facilities.

[ [2011 c 263 s 15](#); [1984 c 144 s 8](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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## **RCW [19.122.090](#)**

### **Excavation without an excavation confirmation code—Penalty.**

(1) Any excavator who excavates, without an excavation confirmation code when required under this chapter, within 35 feet of a transmission pipeline is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) Any excavator who excavates within 35 feet of a transmission pipeline, prior to the work-to-begin date on the notice when required under this chapter, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(3) Any excavator who excavates within 35 feet of a transmission pipeline, prior to receiving positive response from the facility operator of the transmission

pipeline when required under this chapter, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

[ [2025 c 292 s 9](#); [2005 c 448 s 5](#).]

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### **RCW [19.122.100](#)**

#### **Violation of RCW [19.122.090](#)—Affirmative defense.**

If charged with a violation of RCW [19.122.090](#), an equipment operator is deemed to have established an affirmative defense to such charges if:

- (1) The equipment operator was provided with an excavation confirmation code;
- (2) The excavation was performed in an emergency situation.
- (3) The equipment operator was provided a false confirmation code by an identifiable third party; or
- (4) Notice of the excavation was not required under this chapter.

[ [2025 c 292 s 10](#); [2011 c 263 s 16](#); [2005 c 448 s 6](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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### **RCW [19.122.110](#)**

#### **False excavation confirmation code—Penalty.**

Any person who intentionally provides an equipment operator with a false excavation confirmation code is guilty of a misdemeanor.

[ [2011 c 263 s 17](#); [2005 c 448 s 7](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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### **RCW [19.122.120](#)**

#### **One-number locator service to provide excavation confirmation code.**

Upon receipt, during normal business hours, of notice of an intended excavation, the one-number locator service shall provide an excavation confirmation code.

[ [2005 c 448 s 8](#).]

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### **RCW [19.122.130](#)**

#### **Commission to contract with nonprofit entity—Safety committee—Review of violations of chapter.**

(1) The commission must contract with a statewide, nonprofit entity whose purpose is to reduce damages to underground and above ground facilities, promote safe excavation practices, and review complaints of alleged violations of this chapter. The contract must not obligate funding by the commission for activities performed by the nonprofit entity or the safety committee under this section.

(2) The contracting entity must create a safety committee to:

- (a) Advise the commission and other state agencies, the legislature, and local governments on best practices and training to prevent damage to underground utilities, and policies to enhance worker and public safety; and
- (b) Review complaints alleging violations of this chapter involving practices related to underground facilities.

(3)(a) The safety committee will consist of thirteen members, who must be nominated by represented groups and appointed by the contracting entity to staggered three-year terms. The safety committee must include representatives of:

(i) Local governments:

(ii) A natural gas utility subject to regulation under Titles [80](#) and [81](#) RCW:

(iii) Contractors:

(iv) Excavators:

(v) An electric utility subject to regulation under Title [80](#) RCW:

(vi) A consumer-owned utility, as defined in RCW [19.27A.140](#):

(vii) A pipeline company:

(viii) A water-sewer district subject to regulation under Title [57](#) RCW:

(ix) The commission:

(x) A telecommunications company: and

(xi) A labor organization that historically represents workers who perform underground utility or excavation work.

(b) The safety committee may pass bylaws and provide for those organizational processes that are necessary to complete the safety committee's tasks.

(4) The safety committee must meet at least once every three months.

(5) The safety committee may review complaints of alleged violations of this chapter involving practices related to underground facilities, except for those complaints relating to damage to pipeline facilities or

which involve violations of RCW [19.122.075](#) or [19.122.090](#). Any person may bring a complaint to the safety committee regarding an alleged violation occurring on or after January 1, 2013.

(6) To review complaints of alleged violations, the safety committee must first receive sufficient evidence that a probable violation occurred. Once sufficient evidence has been received, the safety committee must appoint at least three and not more than five members as a review committee. The review committee must be a balanced group, including at least one excavator and one facility operator.

(7) Before reviewing a complaint alleging a violation of this chapter, the review committee must provide all complaint forms, materials, and supporting evidence that will be presented or used by the person or company making the complaint, to the alleged violator no less than 30 days prior to the scheduled date of review. Both parties must be notified of the review and be provided the opportunity to participate.

(8) The safety committee may provide written notification to the commission, with supporting documentation, that a person has likely committed a violation of this chapter, and recommend remedial action that may include a penalty amount, training, or education to improve public safety, or some combination thereof.

[ [2025 c 292 s 11](#): [2020 c 162 s 3](#): [2017 c 20 s 1](#): [2012 c 96 s 1](#): [2011 c 263 s 18](#).]

## NOTES:

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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## RCW [19.122.140](#)

### **Commission authority—Receipt of notification of violation of chapter—Referral to attorney general.**

(1) The commission may enforce the civil penalties authorized in RCW [19.122.070](#) or [19.122.075](#) when it receives written notification from the safety committee created under RCW [19.122.130](#) indicating that a violation of this chapter has likely been committed by a person subject to regulation by the commission, or involving the underground facilities of such a person.

(2) If the commission receives written notification from the safety committee pursuant to RCW [19.122.130](#) that

a violation of this chapter has likely been committed by a person who is not subject to regulation by the commission, and in which the underground facility involved is also not subject to regulation by the commission, the commission may refer the matter to the attorney general for enforcement of a civil penalty under RCW [19.122.070](#) or [19.122.075](#). The commission must provide funding for such enforcement. However, any costs and fees recovered by the attorney general pursuant to subsection (3) of this section must be deposited by the commission in the fund that paid for such enforcement.

(3) In a matter referred to it by the commission pursuant to subsection (2) of this section, the attorney general may bring an action to enforce the penalties authorized in RCW [19.122.070](#) or [19.122.075](#). In such an action, the court may award the state all costs of investigation and trial, including a reasonable attorneys' fee fixed by the court. [ [2017 c 20 s 2](#); [2011 c 263 s 19](#).]

#### **NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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#### **RCW [19.122.150](#)**

#### **Commission authority—Violations of chapter—Imposition of penalties.**

(1) The commission may investigate and enforce violations of any provision of this chapter relating to pipeline facilities without initial referral to the safety committee created under RCW [19.122.130](#).

(2) If the commission's investigation of notifications received pursuant to RCW [19.122.140](#) or subsection (1) of this section substantiates violations of this chapter, the commission may impose penalties authorized by RCW [19.122.055](#), [19.122.070](#), [19.122.075](#), and [19.122.090](#), and require training, education, or any combination thereof.

(3) With respect to referrals from the safety committee, the commission must consider any recommendation by the committee regarding enforcement and remedial actions involving an alleged violator.

(4) In an action to impose a penalty initiated by the commission under subsection (1) or (2) of this section,

the penalty is due and payable when the person incurring the penalty receives a notice of penalty in writing from the commission describing the violation and advising the person that the penalty is due. The person incurring the penalty has fifteen days from the date the person receives the notice of penalty to file with the commission a request for mitigation or a request for a hearing. The commission must include this time limit information in the notice of penalty. After receiving a timely request for mitigation or hearing, the commission must suspend collection of the penalty until it issues a final order concerning the penalty or mitigation of that penalty. A person aggrieved by the commission's final order may seek judicial review, subject to provisions of the administrative procedure act, chapter [34.05](#) RCW. (5) If a penalty imposed by the commission is not paid, the attorney general may, on the commission's behalf, file a civil action in superior court to collect the penalty. [[2025 c 292 s 12](#); [2017 c 20 s 3](#); [2011 c 263 s 21](#).]

**NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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**RCW [19.122.160](#)**

**Damage prevention account.**

The damage prevention account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. All receipts from moneys directed by law or the commission to be deposited to the account must be deposited in the account. Expenditures from the account may be used only for purposes designated in RCW [19.122.170](#). Only the commission or the commission's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter [43.88](#) RCW.[ [2011 c 263 s 12](#).]

**NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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**RCW [19.122.170](#)**

**Damage prevention account—Use of funds.**

The commission may use money deposited in the

damage prevention account created in RCW 19.122.160 to:  
(1) Develop and disseminate educational programming designed to improve worker and public safety relating to excavation and underground facilities: and  
(2) Provide grants to persons who have developed educational programming that the commission and the safety committee created pursuant to RCW [19.122.130](#) deem appropriate for improving worker and public safety relating to excavation and underground facilities.  
[\[2011 c 263 s 13.\]](#)

**NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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**RCW [19.122.180](#)**

**Damage prevention account—Deposit of penalties.**

All penalties collected pursuant to RCW [19.122.150](#) must be deposited in the damage prevention account created in RCW [19.122.160](#).  
[\[2011 c 263 s 22.\]](#)

**NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).

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**RCW [19.122.901](#)**

**Short title—2011 c 263.**

This act may be known and cited as the underground utility damage prevention act.  
[\[2011 c 263 s 25.\]](#)

**NOTES:**

**Report—Effective date—2011 c 263:** See notes following RCW [19.122.010](#).



**APWA (AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION)  
COLOR CODE**

Color-coded surface marks indicate the locations of buried utility lines. Know how to identify buried lines by their color.

**UNIFORM COLOR CODE  
FOR MARKING  
UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES**

<b>White</b>	PROPOSED EXCAVATION
<b>Pink</b>	TEMPORARY SURVEY MARKINGS
<b>Red</b>	ELECTRIC POWER LINES, CABLES, CONDUIT AND LIGHTING CABLES
<b>Yellow</b>	GAS, OIL, STEAM, PETROLEUM OR GASEOUS MATERIALS
<b>Orange</b>	COMMUNICATION, ALARM OR SIGNAL LINES, CABLES OR CONDUIT
<b>Blue</b>	POTABLE WATER
<b>Purple</b>	RECLAIMED WATER, IRRIGATION AND SLURRY LINES
<b>Green</b>	SEWER AND DRAIN LINES



**Know what's below.  
Call 811 before you dig.  
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