

The Greater Chicago Damage Prevention Council Urges Excavators to Dig Safely during COVID-19 Response

Greater Chicago Region... As the Greater Chicago area continues to address concerns with the COVID-19 virus, there are many efforts that are currently taking place to reduce the local impact. As a professional excavator, please do your part to keep the public safe.

Maintaining essential infrastructure is critical at this time, requiring excavations to continue to take place throughout the region. Per the guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and local officials, it is imperative to practice [social distancing](#) to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Within the excavation community, this can be accomplished through safe digging practices. Damage to underground facilities in this volatile environment may have a severe and potentially life-threatening impact in the form of worker injury, loss of vital services, and heightened potential for exposure to COVID-19 for workers, first responders, and the public during emergency response activities. To protect against these heightened risks, the GCDPC is asking all excavators to take these important steps when excavating.

Prior to Excavation¹

- Schedule essential work accordingly; request locate tickets for work that will begin within 14 days
- Provide reliable field contact information on all locate tickets to ensure communication
- Call 811, 48 hours or two business days before your planned excavation
- Wait the required 2 hours for Emergency locates to be marked by responding utilities
- Call 811 if there is clear evidence of incomplete marks.
- Remember; Permits are required for all excavations in the public way

During Excavation

- Respect all locate marks, Hand dig within 18” tolerance zone
- Plan your excavation to avoid interference with underground facilities
- Use hand or vacuum excavation methods, and visual inspection until clear of the existing marked facility.
- When utilizing “trenchless technologies”, visually verify locations of conflicting facilities prior to and during excavation activities.
- Watch & Protect may be required for critical infrastructure such as natural gas, electric and water facilities; proactively utilize this resource to safely excavate around these utilities.

If you Damage an Underground Facility

- Immediately Call 911 if there is an escape of Natural Gas or other toxic, corrosive gas or liquid
- Immediately notify affected underground facility owners & Chicago 811 for all underground facility damage

The current crisis has brought uncertainty and challenges to every individual and the industries in which we work. During this time it is important as a community to face these challenges together and keep sight of what we can control. As demonstrated in the past, the GCDPC is confident that the excavation community in the Greater Chicago region will rise to the occasion to keep our peers and the public safe.

For additional guidance on safe excavation practices, please visit 811 Chicago at <https://ipi.cityofchicago.org/Digger>

Greater Chicago Damage Prevention Council (GCDPC) /811 Chicago

¹ As of March 24, 2020, CDOT is processing permit applications and non-emergency dig tickets. Further COVID-19 related mitigation measures may result in increased restrictions on the type of excavation activity CDOT allows in the public right-of-way.