

Safe Excavation for Contractors in Ontario

Answers to your excavation questions



What is a locate?

Locates are colour-coded ground markings identifying the approximate position of underground lines and cables on a proposed job site. They're made using temporary paint or flags and are always accompanied by a locate sheet that maps out where lines are buried in relation to fixed objects such as poles, buildings or sidewalks.

When is a locate required?

By law, a locate is required any time you're breaking ground on a project.

Who's responsible for arranging a locate?

Whatever company is completing the excavation is responsible for obtaining locates, regardless of who owns the property or who contracted out the work. If there are multiple excavators working on one site, you may add multiple company names to the locate request.

Who do I contact to request a locate?

To get a free locate, submit your request via the Ontario One Call contractor portal at [OntarioOneCall.ca](https://www.ontarioonecall.ca).

Which utilities need to be marked?

Ontario One Call will notify all owners of buried infrastructure on your behalf. These include electric, water, sewage and natural gas utilities, as well as telecommunication companies.

What does it cost to get a locate?

Utility locates are a free service. There's no cost to you. Any privately owned infrastructure, such as a gas line that runs from a meter to a pool heater or barbecue, won't be covered under the Ontario One Call request. A private locate company will need to be hired to mark these lines and there is a charge for this service.

RESPECT THE MARKS

Whether you've been hired for a landscaping job or a major construction project, hitting an underground utility line can delay your project, make you accountable for costly repairs, and put your crew, company and community at serious risk. Check out answers to common questions about safe excavation.



How far in advance do I need to call for a locate?

A utility locate request must be made no less than five business days prior to the planned start date of your project. By law, you must have both paint markings and your locate sheet finalized before starting any work.

What information do I need to provide when I call?

You'll need to provide Ontario One Call with your company name and address, your client's information, your dig location, project start date, a description of the project, the type of project being completed, how you plan to dig (shovel, excavator, etc.) and how deep you plan to dig.

FAQ Get the answers to your excavation questions



What happens after a locate is requested?

A qualified utility representative will visit your job site and mark the location of all underground cables and pipes. They do this by painting or inserting flags in the ground along the path of the pipe or cable. They'll also provide accompanying paperwork and locate drawings so you can verify that the ground markings match the information provided in the drawings.

How will I know when all locates are complete?

You can check the status of your request on the Ontario One Call web portal. Owners of buried infrastructure will mark the status of their lines as either "clear" or "complete". A clear status means there's no risk and that your proposed digging area is safe. A complete status means the locate has been marked on your job site. All utilities must be marked as either clear or complete to proceed.

What if the locate drawing doesn't match the paint markings?

If there is any doubt about the location of underground natural gas lines, contact Enbridge Gas as soon as possible. A member of the Damage Prevention team will come out to the site to verify the position of the locates and provide you with the information you need to excavate safely. This is a free service.



How close to a locate can I dig?

The actual location of the buried line may be within one metre on either side of the paint or locate flags placed on your job site. This is referred to as the tolerance zone. When digging in the tolerance zone, you must first use a shovel or hydrovac to expose any hidden pipes before using machinery.

How long is a locate valid for?

An Enbridge Gas locate is valid for 60 days from the date that the locate was completed. If you have not finished excavating within those 60 days, a new locate is required.

What happens if flags are moved or paint is removed?

Moving or removing locates makes them invalid and you'll be liable for any damage that occurs. You must call Ontario One Call to arrange a new locate before you start excavating.

Am I liable if I don't follow safe excavation guidelines?

Yes, if you damage an underground utility as a result of not following safe excavation guidelines on the job site, you'll be responsible for the full cost of labour and materials to repair the infrastructure and could incur additional penalties and serious charges.

How do I know if I've damaged a natural gas line?

If you smell rotten eggs, hear an unusual hissing sound, or see dust or leaves blowing in a localized area, you may have damaged a natural gas line. You may also see a physical puncture or gouge on the line.

What should I do if I hit a natural gas line?

If you think you've hit a natural gas line, stop work immediately and shut off all equipment to avoid ignition. Do not attempt to control the release of gas yourself. Evacuate the job site and surrounding area, call 911 from a safe distance away and contact Enbridge Gas immediately at 1-866-763-5427.

Learn more safe digging tips
enbridgegas.com/excavatesafely