



# Buried Utilities and Safety

It is important to know the location of underground utility lines on job sites. Rupturing or breaking underground utilities such as electrical power cables and gas lines can result in serious injuries or even death.

## A Worksite Story

A construction crew was using an auger to dig a hole to anchor a utility pole support cable. Suddenly the auger hit a small plastic gas line. Escaping gas soon reached a nearby building, where it ignited about 20 minutes later. Four people died and 15 were injured. In addition, three buildings were destroyed and more than a dozen others had extensive damage.

- ✖ What caused this incident?
- ✖ How could this have been prevented?
- ✖ Have you ever been injured while working around buried utilities, or do you know someone who has? If so, what happened?

## Remember This

### Before digging:

- Check with your supervisor to make sure utility companies have been notified and that all underground lines have been properly marked.

### How can we stay safe today?

What will we do at the worksite to prevent injuries from buried utilities?

---

---

---

---

- Look for paint, flags, or stakes marking locations of electrical lines (marked with red) and gas lines (marked with yellow).
- Electrical lines should also have a warning device, such as a range control or limit.
- If you do not see any markings and are on public land, you can call 811 to make sure that it is safe to dig.
- If you are on private property, ask your supervisor or the property owner to have a private utility locating service locate the utilities before you start digging.
- Review marked-out areas. They may not be exact. If you are not sure about the markings, ask your supervisor or call the utility company to verify before digging.
- Plan to dig by hand when working within 2 feet of a mark-out, to make sure you do not hit a utility line or conduit with heavy equipment. Ask your supervisor or call the expert who will review the work area before work begins and as needed during your shift.

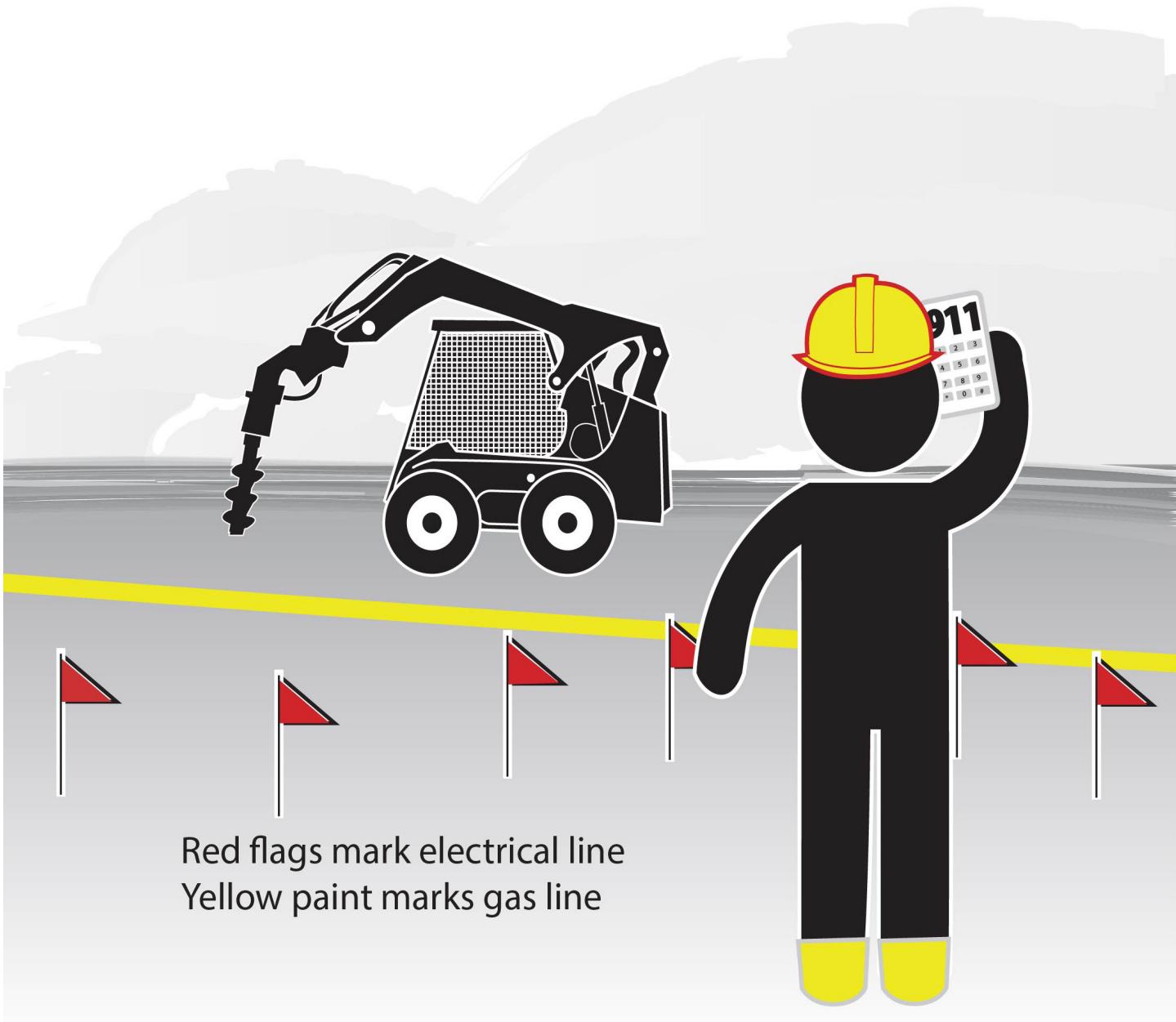
### When digging

- Look for:
  - Signs of previous digging
  - Changes in soil types
  - Asphalt patches or depressions
  - Concrete, plastic, or gravel
- **If you hit a line, you must report it!** If it is a gas line, evacuate everyone immediately, secure the area, and call the fire department and the gas utility company.

OSHA Standards: 1926.651 and 1926.652; 1926.1408



# Buried Utilities and Safety



Red flags mark electrical line  
Yellow paint marks gas line

- Check with your supervisor to confirm that utilities have been properly marked before digging.
- Look for paint, flags, or stakes marking locations of utilities—electrical lines are marked with red and gas lines are marked with yellow. If you are on public land and do not see markings, call 811 to find out if it is safe to dig.
- If you hit a line, report it immediately!** If it is a gas line, evacuate everyone immediately, secure the area, and call the fire department and the gas utility company.

**GET  
INFORMATION**

CDC/NIOSH INFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-800-232-6348 | [www.cdc.gov/info](http://www.cdc.gov/info) | [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

CPWR: Contact 301-578-8500 | [cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com](mailto:cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com) | [www.cpwr.com/toolbox-talks](http://www.cpwr.com/toolbox-talks)

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2022-139 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26616/NIOSHPUB2022139> | August 2022