

# Changes for Many Dig Safe Callers

## *New System More Efficient, With the Proper Information*



### Dig Safe Notification

The NH Dig Safe rules cover nearly every kind of public excavation. An "excavator" is any person performing an excavation. Highway departments are frequent "excavators."

Therefore, they must notify Dig Safe System,

Inc. (DSS) 3 days before digging. (This excludes Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.)

DSS notifies member companies of proposed excavation projects. Then members identify the location of underground facilities. DSS gives callers a permit number as confirmation. That "ticket" is good for 30 days. Any digging after that requires another permit.

DSS recently upgraded its computer system. Some callers have seen no change. They have routinely provided information that fits the new system. Others, however, must now give different information. This article is for those people, and for those who will begin requesting Dig Safe permits. Understanding the system should help everyone efficiently acquire permits.

### Background for System Changes

Using a computer system DSS determines which utility companies to notify. In the past, DSS relied on a database of street names. Utilities supplied a list of streets where they had buried facilities. The database could only search for streets in their entirety but not for street segments. When DSS staff punched in a street name, all the companies listed received the excavation notice.

However, a utility might have buried lines on only a street section. When it still received an excavation notice, it had to investigate it. This was inef-

ficient for both the member utilities and the callers seeking permits.

DSS now uses more efficient GIS/GPS technology. It can now identify precisely the utilities in the excavation area. That is, it can if it has the needed information.

### The Needed Information

DSS can notify the affected companies **if callers provide one of these information types:**

1. Address; e.g., 25 Main St.
2. Address Range; e.g., 5-25 Main St.
3. Intersection; e.g., Main St. at Green St.
4. Latitude and Longitude Coordinates (LLC); e.g., Latitude 42.4795875° North and Longitude 71.1192741° West.

This information is usually sufficient to identify location. However, more information can speed buried line location. The following will help utility locators define the exact project area and mark buried facilities.

- ◆ pole, post, pedestal, transformer, or manhole numbers
- ◆ lot numbers
- ◆ new streets and developments
- ◆ place names, such as McDonalds or the Public Library
- ◆ mile markers and exit numbers of highways
- ◆ locations that begin at an intersection and then proceed down either street

At times, callers cannot give an address, address range, intersection, or LLC. DSS staff must still locate the proposed excavation area on their maps. Therefore, the caller must provide other information. Most important are **distance and direction from existing streets**. Distance should be in feet. The staff member then draws a polygon to define the excavation area. Staff will often add information as comments. The computer system will notify the affected utilities.

## When DSS Staff Must Draw on Maps

The following are examples of when DSS staff will need additional information.

**Example 1: For pole, post, pedestal, transformer, or manhole numbers; place names; lot numbers.** The caller plans to replace a speed limit sign post. An address, an intersection, or LLC are not available.

The caller must give distance and direction information. An example is “Replacing the 35 mph speed limit sign on the north side of Montvale Avenue 250 feet east of Main Street.”

**Example 2: For New Streets.** The city/town plans to repair ditches along a road that might not appear on recent maps.

DSS staff needs distance and direction information from mapped streets to define the excavation area. For example, “Grading the ditches for 850 feet on both sides of Springdale Road. It goes north from Main Street, starting 600 feet west of Elm Street.”

**Example 3: Excavation at a location without an address.** Highway crews will install new guardrail for a steep slope on Rural Road. An address, an intersection, or LLC are not available.

DSS staff needs the intersecting street names, and distances and directions. For example, “Installing a guardrail on the south side of Rural Road between Main Street and Elm Street. It begins 350 feet from Main Street for a length of 110 feet.”

## Summary

Municipal highway departments must notify Dig Safe **before any excavation**. If they provide the necessary information, they will receive a permit number. The best information is an address, address range, intersection, or LLC. If not, they must provide



distance and direction information.

Municipal officials can notify DSS by phone at 1-888-dig-safe. They can apply online at [www.digsafe.com](http://www.digsafe.com) (click on “Online Options.”) The website also has information and forms under “Services.”

In addition, excavators must “premark” excavation areas. They must define the point or perimeter with white paint, stakes, or other white markings.

*Thanks to Lisa Faso, Dig Safe System, Inc. Public Relations Representative, who provided basic information and reviewed this article.*

*Sources:*

*For the complete Dig Safe rules, see <http://www.digsafe.com/documents/nbrules.pdf>.*

*For more on DSS procedures, see <http://www.digsafe.com/services/downloadableforms.htm>*

## NHPWMEA Fall Meeting

The New Hampshire Public Works Municipal Engineers will hold its Fall Meeting again this year at the New Hampshire Municipal Association’s Annual Conference. The session will be from 9:30-12:00 and 1:30 -2:45 on November 13, 2003 at the Center of New Hampshire, Manchester.

Kevin Nyland from the NHDOT will explain the new Wetlands Notice of Intent procedure. Municipalities will find this process easier for routine maintenance and more timely than the previous procedure.

Deb Loiselle and Jim Colburn will share their experience working with EPA and NPDES II regarding construction Activities. This topic that will be of interest to all municipalities.

Eric Williams from NHDES will discuss grant opportunities for municipalities when working with Nonpoint Source Pollution.

Tom Ballestero, UNH Civil Engineering Department, will discuss Retention vs. Detention Ponds. This is an on-going topic of discussion for engineers and maintenance people.

To register for the event, contact NHMA at 800-852-3358. Looking forward to seeing you there!