



**SAFE DIGGING**  
*is no accident*

**CALL 811 OR CLICK**

**[www.tn811.com](http://www.tn811.com)**

## **BURIED UTILITY LINES ARE OUT OF SIGHT AND THEREFORE OUT OF MIND.**

Accidental damage from digging often interrupts important services like broadband internet, electric power, natural gas, sewer, and water. Before you dig, it's important to take steps to protect underground cables, pipes, and wires.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO AVOID DIGGING INTO AN UNDERGROUND UTILITY?**

Safe digging starts with a free call to 811. When you call 811 before you dig, Tennessee 811 sends out a locate request to your local utility providers prompting them to find and mark their underground lines in the area where you'll be digging.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T CALL BEFORE I DIG?**

You're taking a big risk if you dig without calling 811. Service outages may be a minor inconvenience, but repair costs can be overwhelming and utility damages can cause serious harm. You could hit a fiber optic cable that shuts off internet to a home or a neighborhood; you could dig through a primary electric line and be electrocuted; you could puncture a plastic gas line and cause an explosion.

State law requires anyone performing excavation work in Tennessee to call 811 before they dig. If you're found in violation of the law, you could face monetary penalties up to \$15,000.



## **CAN I CONTACT 811 ONLINE?**

Visit [www.tn811.com](http://www.tn811.com) to submit your locate request online. Our E-Ticket system is great for homeowners or contractors who only need the occasional locate. We also offer Remote Ticket Entry through our ticket portal for power users who need multiple locates on a daily or weekly basis.

## **WHAT IF I'M NOT DIGGING VERY DEEP?**

It's a common misconception that you only have to call 811 if you're digging deeper than a certain depth, and that minimum depth tends to vary according to who you talk to.

The truth is it's a good idea to contact 811 anytime you'll be breaking ground or disturbing earth, whether you're going three inches or three feet deep.

Even home improvement projects like setting fence posts, replacing a mailbox, building a deck, or planting a garden could lead to damage if the proper precautions aren't taken.

## **DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING BEFORE I CONTACT 811?**

Use white spray paint, white pin flags, or other white markings to indicate where you will be digging. White marks are required by law, with a few exceptions.



## **WHAT INFO DO I NEED TO HAVE WHEN I CONTACT 811?**

Whether you call 811 or enter a request online, we'll need to know what type of work you're doing, the address or street you're working at, a cross street for reference, and marking instructions that describe the area where you'll be working. Marking instructions can be as simple as "mark front of property" when the dig site is a specific address.

## **WHICH UTILITY COMPANIES WILL BE NOTIFIED?**

The utilities we send your request to will depend on the location of your work, so we'll share the list with you once we have collected the necessary information about where you're digging. Tennessee 811 can only contact utilities that are members of the one-call service, but with more than 500 member utilities, our membership represents the majority of utility companies operating in the state. Once you know who we'll be contacting, you're welcome to contact any nonmember utilities directly.

## **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

After you call 811 or enter a request online, the utilities have three (3) working days (72 hours excluding weekends and holidays) to respond. In the event of an emergency excavation, the allotted response time will be less than 72 hours, but at least two (2) hours, depending on when the digging work will begin. State law defines an emergency as digging to repair or restore service or digging to address a situation that is a danger to life, health, or property.

## **WHAT ARE TENNESSEE 811'S BUSINESS HOURS?**

We're open 24/7 for damages, emergencies, and second notices.

We're open 6 AM to 6 PM Central, Monday-Friday (excluding holidays) for normal locate requests.

Enter your normal locates online anytime, day or night, at [www.tn811.com](http://www.tn811.com).



## HOW WILL THE UTILITIES RESPOND?

All utilities who receive a locate request are required to respond online through our ticket portal. You can check the responses to your locate at [www.tn811.com](http://www.tn811.com) (look for “Positive Response”) or through the free TN811 app in the app store on your smartphone.

Utility companies who have underground lines in the area where you’re digging will mark the approximate location of those buried lines with spray paint and/or flags and respond online to say that the facilities have been marked. Utility companies who serve the area but do not have lines in the specific location where you’ll be digging will respond online to say that they are clear and not in conflict. These utilities may also mark “Clear” or “OK” with paint at the dig site.

## WHAT DO THE MARKINGS MEAN?

A standard color code is used by utility locators, so you’ll know what type of utility has been marked by the color of paint and/or flags that were used. Locators may also include the initials of the company they are locating for or additional information about a buried line. Offset markings may be used to indicate the location of a buried line that is beneath a decorative surface, like a landscaping feature or paved driveway, to avoid unwanted overspray.



## THE LINES ARE MARKED. NOW WHAT?

Check Positive Response to make sure all utilities have responded before you begin your digging work. Several individuals from different companies may need to visit the site. You should plan to wait the full three working days after you call, but you can begin your work as soon as all utilities have responded to say that they are clear or that their lines have been marked. Protect utility markings until all digging work has been completed. You may want to explain to young children that the brightly colored flags are not toys and should not be removed from the ground.

Before you begin your work, look for clear evidence of unmarked utilities. Gas meters, Cable TV pedestals, manholes, and a variety of other above ground structures can be good indicators that a line was not marked or that markings are inaccurate. If you find evidence of an unmarked utility, call 811 to submit a second notice. There is no additional waiting period after the second call, and you may proceed with your project using care to prevent damage to unmarked lines.

Your locate request is good for 15 calendar days from the start date and time on the ticket. If you can't finish your work in that time, make sure you call three (3) working days before the ticket expires to have the lines remarked and the ticket extended.

## WHAT IF I DAMAGE AN UNDERGROUND LINE?

It doesn't take a lot of force to damage buried utilities. Even hand tools like a shovel can dent, gouge, or scrape a utility line or its protective coating. While this type of damage doesn't usually cause immediate harm, it can become a problem if left unchecked, so don't cover up the damage. Call 811 to file a damage notice and then call the utility to start the repair process.

If flammable, toxic, or corrosive gas or liquids are escaping from a damaged pipe, get to a safe distance and then call 911.

## ARE THERE ANY LINES THAT WON'T BE MARKED AFTER I CONTACT 811?

Utility companies mark the public lines that they installed or are responsible for maintaining. In many cases, this means the utility markings will extend up to a property line or a metering device. Water service lines and sewer laterals are two examples of private utilities that are the responsibility of the property owner and are not usually marked after a call to 811. Other private utilities could include (but are not limited to) secondary electric lines to a garage or shop, invisible fencing, irrigation systems, or fuel lines for an outdoor grill or lamp.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHERE IT'S SAFE TO DIG?

Observe a safety zone of two (2) feet or 24 inches on both sides of the utility markings. This safety zone allows for error in the accuracy of locate marks. If you have to dig within the safety zone, use care to avoid damaging a line. If you know you need to cross a utility line, it's a good idea to use soft digging methods to expose the line and verify its depth.





# UNIFORM COLOR CODE

the standard for utility markings



Blue

potable  
water



Green

sewer



Yellow

natural  
gas



Orange

CaTV  
fiber  
phone



White

proposed  
excavation



Red

electricity



Pink

survey



Purple

reclaimed  
water



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