

Dig into SAFE PLANTING & FENCING 10 TIPS from SUNSHINE 811 AVOID DAMAGE TO BURIED UTILITY LINES

- 1 811 BEFORE YOU DIG.**

Contact 811 two full business days before you dig so underground utilities can be located and marked. It's the law, and damages happen when 811 is not contacted. If working under a prime, get a ticket.
- 2 LEAVE ROOM FOR ROOTS TO GROW.**

Know how far plant roots spread. When they run through your dig site, consider moving the plants.
- 3 PAY ATTENTION TO STUMPS AND ENTANGLED ROOTS.**

Underground facilities can run beneath stumps. Similarly, roots can become entangled with utility lines – even when originally planted several feet from the lines. Watch for these lines when grinding/removing a stump.
- 4 AVOID UTILITY BOXES.**

Plain and simple, do not plant or install fence posts near them.
- 5 UNDERSTAND DIGGING IN THE TOLERANCE ZONE.**

The flags and paint used to mark buried facilities show the approximate location of the physical facility, but not the depth. Buried facilities have a tolerance zone that runs 24 inches from a facility's outside edges. When digging in the tolerance zone, you are required to use increased caution to protect and expose underground facilities by hand digging, pot holing, soft digging, vacuum excavation methods, or other similar procedures. Any use of mechanized equipment within the tolerance zone must be supervised by the excavator.
- 6 CHECK UTILITY RESPONSES FOR INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DIG SITE.**

Once you are in the 811 system for a ticket locate, checking responses becomes the primary way utilities communicate with contractors in real time about job sites, status of locate tickets, if the utility owner wants to be present, and other issues.
- 7 RECOGNIZE HAND DIGGING CAN DAMAGE BURIED UTILITY LINES.**

Digging straight down with foot pressure or making sharp jabs will almost certainly cause damage if you hit a buried utility line. Those protective coatings are designed to resist moisture, not sharp objects driven in by workers. In any contest involving steel and plastic, plastic will lose.
- 8 REACH OUT IMMEDIATELY IF YOU CONTACT OR DAMAGE UTILITY LINES.**

If something doesn't look right, stop and call the utility owner. Stop all excavation in the immediate area that could cause further damage until you receive clearance from the operator. DO NOT attempt to repair, bury, or hide the damage. If there is imminent danger, evacuate the site and call 911.
- 9 UNDERSTAND HOMEOWNER RESPONSIBILITIES.**

Homeowners should understand the importance of keeping the marks and flags intact and the potential impacts when they are destroyed or moved. Homeowners are also responsible for showing contractors any private facilities they own. Private utilities can be: water/sewer lines and irrigation lines, electrical lines to sheds, landscape lighting and pool pumps, gas lines to a grill, etc.
- 10 DOCUMENT THE PROPERTY.**

Take photos before and during digging to document your safe digging procedures.

