



# The Scoop



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 5—Spring 2013

## Test Pitting

Learn the safest and most efficient way to begin every excavation job.

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You can perform test-pitting even under less-than-ideal conditions; for example, when the ground is hardened due to drought or when it is frozen.

*Photo courtesy of W Locco LLC*

## USPCD Board

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New board member,  
Ken Hill

## The First Step to Excavation Success: Test-Pitting

Every month, utility owners report their damages to Miss Utility of Delmarva, and the number-one cause of utility damages is always the same: Hit Marked Line. Excavators sometimes joke that the best locator is a backhoe, or that the marks on the ground are targets indicating where you should dig. However, anyone who has been involved with damages knows they are no laughing matter, whether you hit a water main or rip a telephone cable out of the ground.

Test-pitting, sometimes called potholing, is the safest and most efficient way to begin any excavation job. In fact, it should be your first step in every excavation. Yes—every excavation. Considered a “noninvasive” process for determining the exact location of buried infrastructure, test-pitting techniques include shoveling and vacuum excavation.

Although you should start every project with a test-pit, test-pitting on conflict utilities is particularly important, because interpreting the marks left by a locator can pose special difficulties. The test-pitting process gives you valuable information about the conflicting utility and priceless reassurance before you dig. When faced with the challenge of safely exposing all the underground pipes and cables in conflict with your excavation project, you must know the meaning behind the colored markings and have a basic understanding of the type of line you are about to expose.

Mistakes always happen when you are in a hurry. So take your time every time you cross an unknown facility. Never assume you know the depth or exact location of a marked facility. Always test-pit first, taking the following precautions:

- Always dig from the sides, and never on top of the known utility.

- Use only square, blunt, nonsharp tools.
- Take extreme care, even when digging by hand.

## Pre-Excavation Checklist

### In the Office

- Call 811 at least two to three business days before excavation.
- Ensure locate ticket number goes to the job site and is noted.
- Set on-site meetings with all critical facilities in locate area (for example, gas/oil pipelines, high-voltage cables, and fiber optics).
- Obtain a positive response from all utilities via Ticket Check<sup>R</sup> prior to any excavation activity.

### At the Job Site

- Survey the construction site and adjacent area.
- Look for permanent markers.
  - Signs or posts
  - Permanent curb markers
  - Pavement markers (stamped nails, pavement decals, and A-Tags<sup>TM</sup>)
  - Soil markers and other surface signage for landscaped areas
- Note all locate marks and log all utilities present and marked.
- Consult any maps or field sketches of the location.
- Identify all services to buildings, such as
  - Gas meters
  - Cable pedestals

*Test-Pitting continues on page 3*

## President's Message



Dear Friends,

We had a very successful annual meeting in January and elected three people to fill the board positions for 2013–2014: Thomas Matich from the City of Milford, James Crowley from Easton Utilities, and Ken Hill, a new board member, from East Coast Underground. We also reelected Past President Ralph Schieferstein as an honorary board member.

As you read this, we are rapidly approaching April 2013. Again this year, in conjunction with the Common Ground Alliance, April has been designated as Safe Digging Month. Miss Utility is sponsoring and participating in many activities to educate the public about the dangers below and how to avoid them. We have obtained Governor Jack Markell's

Statement of Safe Digging Month in Delaware to highlight the level of concern our government has about public safety and protecting underground utility lines.

We will participate in Earth Day activities to spread the word about safe digging practices and the requirement to "call before you dig." Miss Utility of Delmarva will also have a booth at the Chesapeake Home and Garden Show to provide as much information as we can to those that will be getting out and digging. For the third consecutive year, we will be encouraging fire departments throughout our region to put the "call 811 before you dig" message on their marquees throughout April.

As we reviewed last year's damage reports, it is clear that we must spread the word about safe digging practices. Fifty percent of the damaged utilities are the result of someone cutting marked lines! It is difficult for me to understand why. "Someone" planned ahead and told Miss Utility that they were going to dig. Miss Utility sent notices to the utilities and their contract locators. The locators went to the work site and marked the underground lines. Then "someone" dug right where the locator marked, resulting in a damaged utility line.

We must redouble our efforts to spread the message about what these lines mean, what the legal requirements are, and what a

tolerance zone is. The paint and flags the locators place at the work site are where the utility lines are, not where you should dig. Delaware and Maryland laws define a tolerance zone around these lines and flags where you must hand dig to expose the utility prior to any mechanical excavation: 24 inches in Delaware and 18 inches in Maryland. In fact, Maryland state law forbids any mechanical excavation within the 18-inch tolerance zone. Laws in both states require that you hand dig on either side of the outermost marks. This requirement is important because locating is not an exact science. The actual location of the facility could vary from the position of the marks.

Finally, I hope that many of you attended the February Miss Utility meeting at which Dora Parks presented the rollout of ITIC 2.0. She highlighted the new features and benefits of using the Internet to submit your tickets. If you are not using ITIC, please consider getting trained so you are able to submit your tickets via the Internet. It is easy, you can do it anytime, and we all benefit through lower rates for tickets. Let technology help you manage your ticket submission and work easier and smarter.

Sincerely,

## Safety First

### Protect Yourself Against Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

by Frank Dobson

*Every year we read about people succumbing to the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. Many times these problems are due to a malfunctioning furnace or a kerosene space heater inside the home. These accidents are preventable. Fairly inexpensive detectors that can alert you to leaking carbon monoxide are available for use in the workplace or at home.*

### Always Think Safety!

Frank Dobson is president of Dobson Associates Human Performance/Safety Consultants. Visit his Web site at [www.dobsonassociates.com](http://www.dobsonassociates.com).

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas that interferes with the oxygen-carrying capacity of our blood. CO is nonirritating and can overcome people without warning. Many people die while using gasoline-powered tools and generators in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces that do not have adequate ventilation.

#### Effects of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Neurological damage and illness
- Coma
- Death

#### Symptoms of CO Exposure

- Headaches
- Dizziness and drowsiness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Tightness across the chest

#### Some Sources of Exposure

- Portable generators inside buildings
- Concrete cutting saws
- Compressors
- Gasoline-powered pumps
- Welding tools
- Space heaters

#### Preventing CO Exposure

- Provide adequate ventilation when using gasoline-powered tools or space heaters inside buildings.
- Do not place gasoline-powered tools or generators near doors, because this could

allow CO to enter and build up inside the building.

- Consider using electrical tools or compressed air tools if available.

If you experience symptoms of CO poisoning, get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention.



Photo courtesy of Frank Dobson

## Meet New Board Members

### Solomon McCloskey

After only eight months at the Chesapeake Utilities Corporation, Solomon McCloskey found himself appointed to the company's permanent seat on Miss Utility's board of directors. It's a responsibility he takes seriously. "I've been attending board meetings since last year," he says, "so I could learn from the other members and those with more experience than I have."



Solomon McCloskey

At Chesapeake Utilities, the licensed professional engineer with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering from Widener University serves as the engineering integrity manager. His responsibilities include supervising line locators as well as leak and corrosion technicians. He also oversees the company's Damage Prevention and Pipeline Integrity programs.

Before joining Chesapeake Utilities, Solomon worked as a civil engineer with two different land development firms, generating designs for residential communities and schools, among other land development projects. In that position, he dealt with stormwater systems, sanitary sewers, and water mains, calling in tickets and working with local utilities and municipalities.

It was only after he started working at Chesapeake Utilities, however, that he became aware that Miss Utility had a big organization behind the 811 logo. "As a board member, I will represent Chesapeake's interests and support the message and goals of the damage prevention community. I would also like to find ways for Miss Utility to reach out to engineers and the design community to let them know about Miss Utility's knowledge base and support system and get them more involved in the organization."

Solomon lives with his wife in Smyrna; they are expecting their first child this spring. A member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and National Association of Corrosion Engineers, he loves to play tennis and is a huge Baltimore Orioles fan.

### Ken Hill

One of Miss Utility's newest board members, Ken Hill has twenty-five years' experience in the utility industry. Currently the vice president of overhead operations for East Coast Underground, Ken is responsible for overseeing crews and their equipment.

"I just sort of fell into the utility industry," Ken says. "I was a student at Essex Community College looking for direction, and a friend suggested that the new business of cable TV could be a wide-open opportunity." He started his own contracting business when he was eighteen, and he's never looked back.

Ken eventually sold his business to Utility Line Construction Services, a subsidiary of Asplundh Corporation, and worked with that

company for twelve years. As a supervisor overseeing eighty workers on the Delmarva Peninsula, he had responsibility for day-to-day operations.

He notes that Miss Utility was an important part of his career right from the start. "I needed to learn on the job," he says. In his work today at East Coast Underground, Ken finds that Miss Utility has also been a great help as he's tried to understand and navigate the changing laws affecting his company.

In his new position on the board, Ken wants to help fellow members understand the needs of contractors and to reach out to contractors themselves to get them more actively involved with Miss Utility. "There's always something new to learn," he says. "And Miss Utility is a great resource."

The married father of three, Ken is a member of the Elks who loves all sports, especially football and lacrosse.

#### Where Are the Minutes?

With all the important information we wanted to share regarding test-pitting and safe excavations, we ran out of room!

You can always find the complete text of meeting minutes on our Web site:

<http://www.missutilitydelmarva.com/Monthly-Meeting-Minutes/>

Even better: Please come to the meetings! Meet your colleagues and share your ideas.

#### Test-Pitting continued from page 1

- Electric cables
- Water valves
- Sewer laterals
- Telephone closures
- Look for evidence of trench lines or cleared ROWs.
- Interview the property owner or general contractor to identify potential private facilities that would not be marked, such as
  - Lighting
  - Outbuildings
  - Pools/spas
  - Irrigation
  - Sewer laterals
  - Propane tanks
  - Communication lines
- Photograph the job site.
- Take pictures of locate marks and flags from 360 degrees at varying distances for perspective.

- Take pictures of permanent signage and location relative to dig area.
  - Note the location, height, and operator of overhead lines.
  - Record all required safety signage.
- Erect barricades for streets or sidewalks.
- Place caution or barricade tape.
- Erect fencing.

#### Before You Dig

- When excavating in an area not marked, use a locator capable of detecting metal as a safeguard against a false "all clear."
- Schedule vacuum or hydro excavation for all lines parallel to dig.
- Note all locations for hand digging within the tolerance zone.
- Ensure representatives for all critical facilities are present.
- Ensure emergency equipment is available when hazardous atmospheres are potentially present.
- Have a list of all emergency contact numbers for assets in and adjacent to the dig zone.
- Know the location and directions to the nearest hospital.

# Calendar of Events

*If you know of an event that would benefit Miss Utility members, please contact **Thomas Match** at [tmatch@milford-de.gov](mailto:tmatch@milford-de.gov), and we will include it on our quarterly calendar of events schedule. Provide the dates, location, and any contact or registration information.*

**Miss Utility Meetings**

**Thursday, March 21**

United Water  
2000 First State Boulevard  
Wilmington, DE 19804-3569

**Thursday, April 18**

City of Milford  
Carlisle Fire Company  
615 NW Front Street  
Milford, DE 19963

**Thursday, May 16**

Tidewater Utilities  
1100 South Little Creek Road  
Dover, DE 19901-4727

**Thursday, June 20**

Delmarva Power  
Conference Center  
4100 South Wakefield Drive  
Newark, DE 19702

**Other Events**

**Thursday, March 21**

Delmarva Safety Association  
Health & Safety Conference  
Wicomico Civic Center  
500 Glen Avenue  
Salisbury, MD, 21804

**Tuesday, April 16**

Choptank Electric Cooperative  
Annual Meeting  
Wicomico Youth & Civic Center  
500 Glen Avenue  
Salisbury, MD 21804

**Other Events, continued**

**Thursday, April 25**

Locator Awards Banquet  
6-8:30 p.m.  
Harrington Raceway & Casino  
Gold Room  
Harrington, DE 19952

**Saturday, June 15**

Safe Summer Day  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Brecknock Park  
100 Old Camden Road  
Camden, DE 19934

	November	December	January
Damages	45	31	34
Tickets	75,054	61,192	76,235
Percentage (damages / tickets)	0.060%	0.051%	0.045%

*Are you reporting your damages? If not, why not? It is easy to do. Just go to our Web site and click report damages. Fill in the information, submit, and you are done. Even if you have no damages, please file a report. This helps improve our statistics.*

## Ask Miss Utility

**How much does it cost to use the Miss Utility service?**

Miss Utility is a FREE service provided by the owner-member utility companies. Some municipalities and the Maryland Department of Transportation may charge to mark their utility lines. The Miss Utility customer service representative will notify you of any owner-member charges at the time of your call or Internet request.

**Do you have a question for Miss Utility?**

Send it to **Thomas Match** at [tmatch@milford-de.gov](mailto:tmatch@milford-de.gov).

## Editorial Staff

- Thomas Match—Vice President and Chair, Public Awareness Committee**
- Loretta S. Carlson—Editor**
- Bradley C. Ebaugh—President**
- James Crowley—Treasurer**
- Jason A. Lyon—Secretary**
- Frank Dobson—Safety Consultant**

**Contributing Writers:** Loretta Carlson, Frank Dobson, Bradley Ebaugh, and Thomas Match

## Comments?

This is *your* newsletter. Do you like what you see? Do you have an idea for a topic that you think we should cover in upcoming issues? Please send your comments, questions, and suggestions to **Thomas Match** at [tmatch@milford-de.gov](mailto:tmatch@milford-de.gov)



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