



# The Scoop



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 6—Summer 2014

## Tips for Homeowners

Learn what all homeowners need to know before starting excavation projects on their property.

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Electrical power is a "silent killer."

Photo courtesy of Frank Dobson

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## Tips for Homeowners: Dealing with Springtime Projects

Miss Utility not only works with business owners and municipalities, it also serves homeowners who are planning excavation projects such as planting a garden, widening the driveway, or installing a mailbox or fence. Whether homeowners are doing the work themselves or they have hired a contractor, they should understand their responsibilities under the law.

### Why Call Miss Utility?

Since October 1, 2010, homeowners have been required by law to contact Miss Utility before they use mechanized equipment near a utility line. Delaware state law mandates a 24-inch tolerance zone on each side of a marked utility; Maryland state law mandates an 18-inch tolerance zone.

The person doing the excavation/digging must call Miss Utility to submit a locate request. In the event of an emergency, the party that submits this request is liable for any damages. Therefore, if the homeowner does all or part of the work, the homeowner must submit the request to the One Call Center (OCC). If the homeowner hires a contractor, that company must submit its own request.

The direct line to the OCC in Delaware is 800.282.8555; in Maryland, the direct line is 800.441.8355. However, the simplest contact to remember is 811, a number that works throughout the United States. The OCC operator will gather information about the project and notify affected local utility companies, which will send a locator to mark underground lines, pipes, and cables. (For details on the information OCC will need to process a locate request, visit [www.missutility.net/homeowners/homeownersfaq.asp](http://www.missutility.net/homeowners/homeownersfaq.asp).)



Excessive planting around a utility access area Photo by Mike Krafft, W Locco

It is not enough, however, to call in the request. The homeowner or contractor also must contact Ticket Check at 866.821.4226 or use the Search and Status tool at [www.missutilitydelmarva.com](http://www.missutilitydelmarva.com) before digging to check responses from each owner-member. If the work-to-begin date and time issued by Miss Utility of Delmarva have arrived and a member failed to respond or has marked the facilities incorrectly, the homeowner or contractor should contact that facility owner directly. Miss Utility can provide the appropriate phone numbers. To ensure the safety of the excavation crews and the general public, excavation should not begin until the excavator is confident that all facilities have been marked correctly.

*Homeowner Tips, continued on page 3*

## President's Message



Dear Friends,

Organizations across the country recognized April as Safe Dig Month. Once again this year, Miss Utility of Delmarva obtained a statement in observance of Safe Dig Month in Delaware from Governor Jack A. Markell. The governor urged all Delawareans to always contact Miss Utility before starting any digging projects for safety reasons and to protect the underground utilities.

We celebrated Safe Dig Month by holding the sixth annual Miss Utility of Delmarva Locator Achievement Awards banquet at the Harrington Racetrack & Casino Gold Room.

We acknowledged the professionalism, hard work, and diligence of thirty-one locators who remained damage-free throughout 2013. You will see them throughout the year wearing the distinctive jacket with the Locator Achievement Award Winner emblem on the sleeve. In addition to the personalized jacket, they received a framed certificate and a cash award. Great job!



Each winner completed a survey. As in previous years, every locator cited the need for effective communication between the locators and excavators as the key to maintaining a damage-free year. Not only is it important for locators to provide their cell numbers to the excavators, but the excavators also need to call if they have any questions. Every Miss Utility locate ticket needs to have accurate contact numbers that will be answered when a locator calls. A number that

rolls to voice mail does not provide effective communication.

Members of Miss Utility found many other creative ways to publicize Safe Dig Month. Some had their employees form a giant 811 to remind people to call Miss Utility prior to beginning any digging project. Motorists may have noticed the sign in front of Delaware Electric Cooperative (DEC) on Route 13 displaying the Call 811 message. Additionally, DEC ran television commercials featuring their locators and the "Call Before You Dig" message.

Promoting the educational and safe digging message is a year-long endeavor. Miss Utility members manned a booth at the Maryland Municipal League in June and handed out safe dig reminders at Camden Safe Summer Days. It is a never-ending task to remind everyone to have their project areas marked by the utilities BEFORE they dig. Such efforts have two goals: keep everyone safe and protect the utilities.

Help us by following the law and spreading the word.

Sincerely,

## Safety First

### Electrical Safety: OSHA Guidelines

by Frank Dobson

*Electrical power is essential to both construction sites and manufacturing sites. Sometimes referred to as the "silent killer," electrical power also has long been recognized as a serious workplace hazard. It exposes employees to dangers such as serious burns, electrical shock, electrocution, fires, and explosions. Electrical hazards account for more than a hundred workplace fatalities each year in the United States.*

Here are some of OSHA's tips for working safely around electrical hazards both on and off the job.

- Assume that all overhead wires are energized at lethal voltages. Never assume that a wire is safe to touch even if it is down or appears to be insulated.
- Never touch a fallen overhead power line. Call the electric utility company to report fallen electrical lines.
- Stay at least 10 feet (3 meters) away from overhead wires during operations, cleanup, and other activities. If working at

heights or handling long objects, survey the area for the presence of overhead wires before starting work.

- If an overhead wire falls across your vehicle while you are driving, stay inside the vehicle and continue to drive away from the line. If the engine stalls, do not leave your vehicle. Warn other people not to touch the vehicle or the wire. Call or ask someone to call the local electric utility company and emergency services.
- Never operate electrical equipment while you are standing in water.
- Never repair electrical cords or equipment unless you are qualified and authorized.
- Have a qualified electrician inspect electrical equipment that has gotten wet before energizing it.
- If you are working in damp locations, inspect electrical cords and equipment to ensure that they are in good condition and free of defects, and always use a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).

Always use caution when working near electricity.



Photo courtesy of Frank Dobson

**Remember:** You Only Need a Few Minutes More to Do the Job Safely—and Your Life Is Worth Every Minute.

### 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).

## Miss Utility of Delmarva 2013 Locator Awards

On April 24, Miss Utility of Delmarva wrapped up Safe Dig Month with the sixth annual Locator Achievement Awards banquet. This year we honored thirty-one locators from the Delmarva Peninsula for outstanding on-the-job safety performance at a ceremony held in the Gold Room at Harrington Racetrack & Casino. Award-winning locators met rigorous criteria, including having zero at-fault damages during the period from January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2013. Two of this year's winners—Thomas Matich and Tom Preller—have won the locator award five years in a row.

This year's speaker represented the Delaware Electric Cooperative. Layton Wheeler, vice president of member services, stressed the importance of common sense when it comes to safety and praised locators for the key role they play in protecting utilities and enhancing public safety. After dinner and the keynote presentations, the award winners each received a certificate, a cash award, and a personalized jacket.

### List of Winners

Mark Akers, Danella Construction  
 Cameo Blades, Delaware Electric Cooperative  
 Jonathan Carrington, Chesapeake Utilities  
 Justin Chambers, Chesapeake Utilities  
 Galen Collison, Danella Construction  
 Barry Daniels, Town of Berlin  
 Staci Dickerson, Premier Utility Services  
 Marvin Dorsey, Danella Construction  
 Clinton Durham, Premier Utility Services  
 Aaron Elrod, Danella Construction  
 Chris Greenwell, Delmarva Power  
 David Henault, Eastern Shore Natural Gas  
 John Homens, Premier Utility Services  
 Steve Hood, Delaware Electric Cooperative  
 Larry Howton, Eastern Shore Natural Gas



Composite Photo by Brad Ebaugh

Steven Keyser, Chesapeake Utilities  
 William Littleton, W Locco  
 Rick Majors, Town of Smyrna  
 Richard Maloof, Premier Utility Services  
 Thomas Matich, City of Milford  
 Heather Miller, Premier Utility Services  
 Phil Morris, Delmarva Power  
 Hector Osorio, STS  
 Mike Petro, Artesian Water  
 Tom Preller, Danella Construction  
 Craig Straub, Premier Utility Services  
 Walter Strzalka, Eastern Shore Natural Gas  
 Mike Tingle, Danella Construction  
 Vincent Turner, Delaware Electric Cooperative  
 Polly Weber, Elkton Gas  
 Joe Williams, University of Delaware

### Homeowner Tips, continued from page 1

#### What About Private Utilities?

Not all utilities are the responsibility of the public utility companies. Private utilities include, but are not limited to, lawn sprinkler systems, invisible fences, electricity for sheds or driveway lighting, sign lighting, gas lamps or gas grills, well or septic systems, and privately placed drain lines. If a project includes plans to install these or similar systems, the homeowner needs to consult the local telephone directory or our Web site at [www.missutilitydelmarva.com](http://www.missutilitydelmarva.com) to find a private locating company to mark the lines.

A homeowner or contractor should never undertake an excavation project without knowing what is underground. Hitting a line—marked or unmarked—can lead to unnecessary repairs and even life-or-death situations. If that happens, call Miss Utility for assistance. If the damage results in a release of natural gas or other hazardous material or the damage creates an emergency, take immediate steps to safeguard life, health, and property. Then call 911 or local emergency personnel to report the incident.

Safe digging is a choice and the law.

#### More Planting Tips

- Always think ahead when planting trees, shrubs, and plants.
- Allow room for growth. Some plants or trees become very large very quickly.
- Survey the area for both overhead and underground lines. Branches or roots growing among utility lines, pipes, and cables could potentially damage them, creating a hazardous situation both for people and property.

#### Check Out the March, April, and May Minutes!

You can always find the complete text of meeting minutes at [www.missutilitydelmarva.com/Monthly-Meeting-Minutes/](http://www.missutilitydelmarva.com/Monthly-Meeting-Minutes/)

Even better: Please come to the meetings to meet your colleagues, share ideas, and learn about our industry's best practices. Come see what you've been missing.

# Calendar of Events

If you know of an event that would benefit Miss Utility members, please contact **Thomas Matich** at [tmatich@milford-de.gov](mailto:tmatich@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, June 19**  
Delmarva Power  
Conference Center  
4100 South Wakefield Drive  
Newark, DE 19702

**Thursday, July 17**  
Chesapeake Utilities  
32145 Beaver Run Drive  
Salisbury, MD 21804

**Thursday, August 21**  
Town of Smyrna  
220 Artisan Drive  
Smyrna, DE 19977

**Thursday, September 18**  
One Call Concepts  
Bear Trap Dunes Clubhouse  
7 Clubhouse Drive  
Ocean View, DE 19970

**Thursday, October 16**  
Delaware Electric Cooperative  
14198 Sussex Highway  
Greenwood, DE 19950

### Other Events

**Saturday, June 14**  
**10 a.m.–2 p.m.**  
Camden Safe Summer Days  
Brecknock Park  
100 Old Camden Road  
Camden, DE 19934

**Thursday–Friday**  
**August 14–15**  
Summer Conference  
Maryland Assn. of Counties  
Powell Convention Center  
4001 Coastal Highway  
Ocean City, MD 21842

	February	March	April
Reported Damages	21	25	29
Tickets	56,984	52,799	89,145
Percentage (damages / tickets)	0.037%	0.047%	0.033%

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.

### Other Events, continued

**Friday, September 26**  
**9 a.m.–4 p.m.**  
Water & Wastewater Expo  
Delaware Rural Water Assn.  
Milford Elks Lodge  
18951 Elks Lodge Road  
Milford, DE 19963

**Tuesday–Friday**  
**October 28–31**  
Greater Chesapeake Damage  
Prevention Training Conference  
Clarion Resort Fontainebleau  
Ocean City, MD 21842

## Ask Miss Utility

*I'm a homeowner, and I want to plant some trees this year, but I'm hiring a company to do the work. How many days prior to planting do I need to call Miss Utility?*

This is a great question, because each state has its own laws and time frames governing excavations. Contact Miss Utility of Delmarva at least two business days, but not more than ten business days, prior to starting the project.

However, by law, the person doing the excavation is responsible for calling in the locate request. If you hire a contractor, the contracting company must call in the Miss Utility ticket request. If you will do the tree planting yourself, then you must call in the request. In either case, initiate the ticket request by dialing 811 and notifying the One Call Center serving the geographic area where the excavation or demolition is to be performed.

Please remember that weather or other unforeseen circumstances may delay fulfillment of ticket requests. The excavator must verify the status of locate requests prior to proceeding with work. See "Tips for Homeowners" on page 1 of this issue of *The Scoop*, and visit the Miss Utility of Delmarva Web site for more details on locate requests: [www.missutilitydelmarva.com](http://www.missutilitydelmarva.com)

*Do you have a question for Miss Utility?*

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

## Editorial Staff

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## 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 Matich at [tmatich@milford-de.gov](mailto:tmatich@milford-de.gov).



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