Home Repair Resource center

HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

BEFORE YOU DIG

Call before you dig – it's the law in Ohio

Over 20 years ago, a worker using a backhoe to dig a trench in the Slavic Village neighborhood of Cleveland struck a natural gas line that ran alongside a building. He miraculously survived the resulting explosion that flipped his machine over backwards, but suffered some second- and third-degree burns. The pipeline he hit was an uncharted line running to an out-building on the same lot.

WHERE ARE THE LINES?

In most older cities, including Cleveland Heights, the buried utility lines enter at the front of the property (from the street) and the overhead utilities enter from the rear. But that pattern does not hold true for all properties. A corner property, for example, may have some or all of the buried utilities coming in from the side of the lot, or a neighborhood may have sewer lines that run from the rear.

LINES CAN BE SHALLOWER THAN YOU THINK

Don't believe for a moment that utility lines are buried too deep for you to hit! In the years since a house was built, activities such as erosion, landscaping, grading or excavating may have changed the depth at which the utilities lie. It's not unusual to find a gas line only inches under the soil surface!

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

That's why it's so important that you **call before you dig**. The Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) is a nonprofit, formed in the 1970s, that serves as a link between utility companies and contractors and residents planning any digging. Though OUPS itself does not physically mark lines, they will convey digging and excavation requests to the member network of utilities and underground facilities (such as TV cable, gas, electrical, water, sewer and phone companies), who will each send a representative to mark the location of that utility's lines.

OHIO LAW

Ohio law requires that everyone MUST contact OUPS before beginning any digging or excavation work – even for smaller or personal projects such as digging fencepost holes, anchoring supports for decks and swing sets, planting trees, removing tree roots and driving landscaping or electrical grounding stakes into the ground. Your call must be placed at least 48 hours but no more than 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before you start to dig.

You can contact OUPS:

CONTACT BY	HOW
Web	www.oups.org
Telephone	800-362-2764
Dial	8-1-1

When you call, a staff person will assign a reference number for your job. Keep this number with your property records so it can be referenced later, as necessary. It is proof that you made contact with OUPS and it's the only way they can look up a past job ticket.

MARK YOUR DIG AREA

Before the utility companies come out, indicate the area where you intend to dig. Usually this is done using white spray paint or white flags to mark the area to be excavated. (Be sure to ask what procedures they want you to follow, as things change over time.) Each utility company will then mark on the ground the location of any lines buried in the indicated area.

> **WORTH THE EFFORT**
> Taking this precaution can save a lot of grief, so it's worth the effort.

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Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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