



## EXCAVATION & DEMOLITION SAFETY TIPS



### What should I do before I begin to work?

Pre-mark the boundaries of the work area with white paint, flags or stakes. Notify Dig Safe® at **811**, 48 hours prior to beginning work, not including Saturday, Sunday or legal holidays. Dig Safe® is a free service that will notify Vermont Gas Systems (VGS) and other member utilities. VGS will then ensure its pipelines are located and marked with yellow paint, flags, stakes or markers. In some cases VGS Locators may write No VTGAS on the ground to let the excavator know that VGS does not have buried lines in the identified work area. Permanent pipeline markers are sometimes used to indicate the presence of buried pipelines but they do not mark the exact location – so call Dig Safe® before excavating.

The excavator is responsible for maintaining utility markings. If markings become obscured, contact Dig Safe® and request remarks. In Vermont Dig Safe® tickets are good for 30 days – so long duration projects will require monthly Dig Safe® requests.

If the work involves Demolition, notify Dig Safe® and then contact VGS directly to verify that gas service to the structure will be disconnected. DO NOT begin demolition activities if you see a gas meter or riser pipe on the building – call VGS at (800) 639-8081 in such cases.

### What precautions should I take while excavating near buried lines?

Pipeline markings indicate the approximate horizontal position of buried pipelines. Therefore, reasonable precautions (hand tools, vacuum excavating or other safe methods) must be used to verify the exact horizontal and vertical location of pipelines before using backhoes or other earthmoving equipment (Note: make sure to locate the actual pipe, not just the tracer wire which VGS uses to locate its plastic pipelines. The pipe should be below or beside the wire, if it is not - contact VGS before using mechanized equipment).

Pipeline depths vary for a variety of reasons - grading, landscaping, erosion, etc. This is especially true for service lines which run from a main in the street to a structure. As such, verify pipeline depth at frequent intervals – NEVER ASSUME the depth remains constant. When boring, Vermont law requires that pipeline locations be visually verified at each crossing and at periodic intervals parallel to the utility.

### What should I do if I damage a pipeline and there is No Leak?

Vermont State law requires excavators to notify utilities when buried facilities are damaged, even if there is not an apparent leak and/or minimal damage. Natural gas is lighter than air, non-toxic, flammable and has a rotten-egg like odor. **If you detect a leak notify the fire department (911) and VGS (800-639-8081) immediately.**

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## **What should I do if I damage a pipeline and Gas Is Leaking?**

- 1) Move a safe distance away from the area (if you can smell, see or hear a gas leak - you are too close). Evacuate adjacent areas and do not allow anyone into the area. Divert automobile traffic if you must. From a safe location - **call the local fire department (911) and Vermont Gas (800-639-8081) immediately.** Make sure you talk to someone in person when reporting damage. Don't leave messages.
- 2) Eliminate all sources of ignition. Do not allow anyone to smoke.
- 3) If you suspect that gas is entering a building and you must evacuate the building:
  - a) Do not ring door bells since they could create a spark. Knock on doors instead.
  - b) Do not turn on light switches or use phones in areas where gas is present.
  - c) Ask the occupants to exit the building immediately.
  - d) Do not allow people to re-enter the building until VGS and the fire department ensures it is safe.
- 4) Do not cover the leak with dirt. This may cause gas to migrate underground to unknown locations such as adjacent buildings – it is better to simply let the gas vent to atmosphere because it is lighter than air.
- 5) Do not attempt to crimp or plug a damaged pipeline because static electricity could ignite the gas.
- 6) If the gas begins to burn, unless necessary to do so, do not attempt to extinguish the fire. Burning natural gas will not explode. Move any flammable materials away from the area and wait for emergency response personnel.

## **There are other reasons why it is important to notify Vermont Gas when pipeline facilities are damaged. The reasons are:**

- 1) Unseen buried fittings may have been damaged when the pipeline was struck or pulled. Gas may be leaking underground that you are not aware of. VGS has sensitive equipment that can detect such leaks.
- 2) Steel pipe is protected from corrosion with a special coating. If the coating is damaged and not repaired, a hazardous leak could develop later.
- 3) Plastic pipe has a small wire running adjacent to it. This wire enables VGS to locate the pipeline. If the wire is damaged, VGS will be unable to locate the line in the future.
- 4) If you discover damage to VGS facilities which appears to have occurred sometime ago, please contact VGS. This will enable VGS to make repairs and relieve you of potential future liability since you were excavating in the area.

### **You should also know that:**

The *State of Vermont requires all utilities* to notify the Department of Public Service (DPS) whenever a buried facility is damaged. In the interest of public safety, the DPS then investigates the reported incident. As a result, utility personnel will need to collect some information from you after damage occurs. You may also be contacted by the DPS after a buried utility is damaged.

Additional information can be obtained at:

Dig Safe® [www.digsafe.com](http://www.digsafe.com)

Pipeline Association for Public Awareness: [pipelineawareness.org/safety-information](http://pipelineawareness.org/safety-information)

National Pipeline Mapping System: [npms.phmsa.dot.gov](http://npms.phmsa.dot.gov)