

# Excavation safety is your responsibility



## Did you know?

Provincial regulations require hand-digging to expose buried utility lines before digging with powered excavation equipment.

For more safety tips visit [fortis.bc.com](http://fortis.bc.com)

Striking or rupturing an underground utility line while digging can create an unsafe situation for you and the general public. It can also seriously delay your work schedule. When planning an excavation, take some time to think ahead. After all, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Excavating diligently near natural gas lines helps prevent injury to the public, your employees and our gas system.

It's your obligation to verify the location of natural gas pipelines in order to ensure safety on the job.

## Excavation regulations

- Gas Safety Regulation
- WorkSafeBC — Occupational Health & Safety Regulation as found on [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com) under "Publications" (OHS Regulation, Part 20).
- Oil & Gas Activities Act (OGAA)
- Terms of existing right of way agreements and crossing permits

### Take these three steps before you start digging:

1. Call BC One Call at **1-800-474-6886** or **\*6886** on your cell phone to request gas and other utility line location information.
2. Use this information to mark the location of buried lines.
3. Hand dig to expose the lines.

## Permits

If you're working within a right of way or in an area within 40 metres of pipe(s) pressurized at 100 psi (700kPa) or greater, a permit is required before digging. Work must not proceed until the permit is issued and arrangements have been made for a FortisBC representative to be on-site. For permit information, please call the number for your area:

Lower Mainland or Interior, call **1-877-599-0996**.  
Vancouver Island, Texada Island, Sunshine Coast or Whistler, call **250-380-5797** or **250-751-8341**.

## Excavation guidelines

Electronically locate and mark lines with paint or stakes and maintain them until digging is underway. You must **HAND DIG FIRST** in several locations to locate and expose the pipe before excavating with power tools and equipment for any purpose other than breaking the surface. See Section 39(7) of the Gas Safety Regulation at [bclaws.ca](http://bclaws.ca)

## Requirements for blasting in the vicinity of a natural gas installation

The notification period of blasting does not start until after a blasting plan has been provided to FortisBC. A blasting plan must be submitted by the contractor's blasting engineer containing the following:

- location of blasting relative to FortisBC natural gas facilities
- type and size of charge and delay
- declaration that the blasting plan is based on the utility information provided, local ground concerns and theory
- confirmation that the blast will not damage the utility

## Safe digging practices

1. “Hand dig” to locate and expose all buried facilities before using powered excavation equipment as per provincial regulations.
2. Powered equipment must not be used within one metre of the gas line when locating and exposing.
3. Wherever possible, powered excavation equipment should be operated to dig parallel to the direction of the gas line.
4. If it is not practical to hand dig, hydrovacating may be considered. Check with FortisBC before hydrovacating to avoid damaging pipe coating or wrapping.
5. You must obtain additional location information and approvals if you wish to excavate outside the area for which gas line location records have been provided.
6. You are not authorized to cut or remove inactive natural gas lines.
7. Notify FortisBC when a pipe or the coating is damaged, so an inspection and repair can be done.
8. If your project is delayed and excavation work has not started within 10 working days of receiving gas line information, you must reverify the location information through BC One Call before beginning work.

**WARNING:** Fittings may protrude from the pipe and can be easily damaged by excavation equipment.

## Don't guess where it's safe to dig

Whether you're digging up a major intersection, installing fence posts, landscaping or building a deck, it's important to know what lies underground before you disturb the surface.

Don't dig blindly. Whatever construction project you're undertaking, it's your responsibility to obtain gas line location information to ensure the public and your workers are safe.

## If you damage a natural gas pipe

Contractors are responsible for notifying FortisBC and WorkSafeBC of damage to natural gas lines. Any person damaging FortisBC underground utilities is responsible for all associated costs.

## Who to call to request gas line location information

Call BC One Call at **1-800-474-6886** or **\*6886** on your cell phone a minimum of three business days before you begin your excavation. This is required under provincial gas safety regulations. FortisBC will give you information to help you safely determine the location of underground natural gas lines. If you have difficulty locating the line(s), contact the number on your faxed locate request form for assistance. If you still can't physically locate the gas line, call FortisBC for locate assistance.

**Remember:** Keep the gas line location information on-site at all times.

## If you smell or hear leaking gas

- Remove all sources of ignition, including lit cigarettes, cell phones, power tools and equipment
- Move workers upwind if possible
- Call FortisBC immediately at **1-800-663-9911**
- Never try to make temporary repairs yourself
- Do not backfill over damaged pipe
- Never bend a pipe to fix a break

## Stop work if

- A pipe has been struck, jarred or pulled
- You detect a rupture
- The tracer wire or pipe wrapping is damaged
- You're working on another utility emergency and discover natural gas pipes where you're digging call FortisBC immediately at **1-800-663-9911**.

## Definitions

### TP and IP pipelines

All pipelines that operate in excess of 700 kPa (100 psi)

### Distribution pressure

All pipelines under 700 kPa (100 psi)

*The information provided on this sheet should be used as a guide only. All natural gas piping and appliance installations should meet manufacturer's instructions and all applicable codes, standards and regulations.*

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