

# STORM CLEANUP AND UTILITY DAMAGE PREVENTION

In the aftermath of a devastating storm, the 811 notification process plays a critical role in protecting communities from accidental damages to buried utility lines during an already stressful situation.

Safety should be the top priority for professional excavators, residents and business owners after a storm.

For clean-up that involves digging or removing trees or fences from the ground, the best way to avoid damaging underground utilities and risking injury or loss of service is to contact Virginia 811 before digging to learn the approximate location of buried lines in your cleanup area. Disturbing a single utility line during hurricane clean up or any other time can lead to inconvenient outages, personal injury, penalties, and expensive repair costs.

Always contact Virginia 811 before you dig or demolish by dialing 8-1-1 or 1-800-552-7001.



## IMPORTANT SAFETY REMINDERS

- Do not place storm debris in front of, around, or on top of known areas of buried and above ground utilities such as meters and pedestals that provide gas, power, communication or water.
- As storm debris collection begins, it is important for all utilities, both underground and overhead, to be identified to help prevent personal injury.
- If digging is required for installation of temporary poles for electrical needs or if any other digging occurs, remember to always contact Virginia 811 beforehand.
- Local utilities may be facing stretched resources causing exigent circumstances. It is strongly encouraged to postpone any non-essential excavation and demolition work in areas impacted by the storm.

"Exigent circumstances" means circumstances outside of an operator's or contract locator's, as described in subsection D of § 56-265.19, control that necessarily prevent an operator or locator from completing the marking task....

- If you suspect damage of any kind to underground lines, contact the utility owner.
- If there is damage to a gas line or dangerous/hazardous lines, call 9-1-1. A gas leak could be occurring if you smell the distinctive natural gas odor, hear a hissing or whistling sound near a gas line, or see dead vegetation or bubbles near a gas line. If this occurs, vacate the area immediately and call 9-1-1.
- Remember that underground utility line depth varies, and there may be multiple utility lines in one common area. The risk of striking an underground utility line exists even when digging only a few inches, so always contact Virginia 811 before you dig.

For the complete definition of exigent circumstances and to learn more about an excavator's responsibilities, refer to the Code of Virginia