

INTRODUCTION

What is used in your area to identify underground utilities? Utility color codes are one of the most common methods for identifying existing underground utilities in construction areas with the intent of protecting the utilities from damage during excavation.

You need to ensure safety above ground and underground. Here are some tips to help you stay safe when digging or trenching:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Always call your local utility companies to identify and mark lines or other hazards in the entire area where you plan to work before you dig
- Identify potential signals that underground utility lines exist (i.e. Valves, covers, etc.)
- Know the capabilities of the equipment you are using – Perform a walk around on the equipment to ensure it is ready and safe for use
- Plan your tasks before you begin and have an emergency plan in case a utility line is damaged – Know the job
- Use a trench shield that is large enough for the job but light enough to be handled by the equipment you are using

SAFETY FIRST

- Use trench shields during trenching operations
- Always install all the spreaders and NEVER remove spreaders from a shield
- Do not store materials close to the sides of a trench – Be sure to provide a means of access and egress in and out of the trench
- Always wear appropriate PPE Know the identification method used for underground utilities

SAMPLE OF UTILITY LINE CODES

- Always validate the color code or the identification method meaning. Below is only intended as an example.
 - White = Proposed Excavation
 - Pink = Temporary Survey Markings
 - Red = Electric power lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
 - Yellow = Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
 - Orange = Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
 - Blue = Potable Water
 - Purple = Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
 - Green = Sewers and Drain Lines

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Have the underground utilities been identified? If so, how? If not, when will you?
- Do you have a plan?
- Do you know all the hazards associated with your task?
- What will you do if an underground utility line is damaged?