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# Best Practice – Electronically Locatable

(Approved November 14, 2019)

## Scope

This Best Practice is meant to help industry stakeholders and the public understand the concept of **electronically locatable** by defining it, citing relevant sources and portions of the Excavation Requirements Statute, and discussing practical application/intention of the law.

Best Practices are recommendations of the Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission (UDPSC).

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## Electronically Locatable Defined

*“Many facilities are damaged due to the fact [the facility] cannot be located electronically. Non-conductive materials, such as PVC, cannot be located using traditional locate methods. When designing and installing non-conductive facilities, the use of a tracer wire or other method (refer to CGA practice 2-5, Markers for Underground Facilities) is part of that design and installation. This will allow these facilities to be identified, located and marked prior to future excavation activities.”*

For the purposes of this Best Practice, the Safety Commission is utilizing the definition from the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Best Practices Guide 2.17 Electronically Locatable Lines.

CGA references NC State Statute Article 8A 87-121 (g) as a source for its best practice.

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## Excavation Requirements Statute §9-1.5-103(10)

*All new underground facilities, including laterals up to the structure or building being served, installed on or after August 8, 2018, must be electronically locatable when installed.*

## Practical Application

- The Law requires all new lines installed on or after August 8, 2018, to be electronically locatable when installed, not including routine repairs.
- There are a number of issues around locating laterals up to the structure or building being served, including ownership, right of ways (ROW), and responsibility. The Safety Commission interprets “up to the structure or building being served” as recommending new laterals from the main to the building or structure it serves be electronically locatable when installed.

### *Locate Method*

- The Safety Commission does not endorse any particular locating method. All locate methods have pros and cons that must be evaluated in picking the best solution. The locating and marking practice must take these errors into account to ensure the locates are performed safely.

### *Installation Method*

- All methods of installation are included in this requirement, including bursting. The type of installation method does not matter or negate the requirement to be electronically locatable.

## Repair, Replace or New

- The Safety Commission considers repair work to be different from new installations, and not be held to the same requirement.
- Work being done that involves replacement of utilities, especially planned replacement/rehabilitation, is considered a new installation and the Safety Commission expects reasonable efforts, when feasible, to make facilities electronically locatable.
- When tracer wire (or the like) is cut, owner/operators must repair the wire when the problem is identified or ensure the facility is otherwise electronically locatable.
- The Safety Commission recommends documentation being kept of work done.

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## Excavation Requirements Statute §9-1.5-103(4)(a)(II)

*A sewer system owner or operator shall provide its best available information when marking the location of sewer laterals in the public right-of-way with clearly identifiable markings. "Best available information" includes tap measurements and historic records. If the sewer lateral can be electronically located, the sewer system owner or operator shall mark and document the location of the sewer laterals in accordance with this subsection (4)(a). If a sewer system owner or operator of a sewer lateral cannot electronically locate the sewer lateral, the excavator shall find the sewer lateral.*

### Practical Application

#### Sewers

- The new language in the law expands to cover sewer laterals, and the expectation is that sewer companies electronically locate sewer laterals, if possible, up to the building or structure.
- The expectation is that the facility owner will identify the Main and Tap measurements (locations), with the best available information.
- The expectation is to use drawings, historical records or other resources, if available, to assist in locating facilities that are not electronically locatable.

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## Excavation Requirements Statute §9-1.5-103(4)(a)(III)

*The marking of customer-owned laterals in the public right-of-way is for informational purposes only, and an owner or operator is not liable to any party for damages or injuries resulting from damage done to customer-owned laterals.*

### Practical Application

#### Customer Owned Utilities

- The expectation is that the facility owner/operator will make an attempt to locate facilities that are customer owned, and the facility owner/operator is not responsible for damages.
- The Safety Commission recommends some type of communication in the locating process that denotes what is owned by the facility owner versus customer owned and the accuracy of the marks. This could be a differentiation in the painted marks or communicated in an onsite meeting.