



**BRITISH COLUMBIA CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION**

**KEEP BC BUILDING!**

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## **Locating Underground Facilities**

Safely locating underground facilities is a concern for all contractors. One-Call systems help to coordinate the process and focus on safety concerns. The One-Call members are the owners and operators of buried facilities (pipelines, gas, electrical, water utilities, telecommunications) who bear the cost of the system. The users are those who are planning to disturb the ground, and the system is free to them. One-Call does not do locates, they simply advise the excavator which member companies will be notified and those member companies follow their procedures for advising of the location of their buried facilities. The benefits of a One-Call system are stated as being: Reduced risk of accidents, injury, environmental or facility damage and down time, as well as improved safety and lower litigation and compensation costs.

Currently, every state in the USA has a One-call system. In Canada, Alberta, BC, Ontario and Quebec have One-Call, with Saskatchewan about to set one up. Alberta was the first province to institute One-Call, back in 1984. Their system is well used with almost five hundred thousand calls a year. In contrast BC only had about 85,000 calls last year. This is primarily because not all utilities and municipalities have signed up. Without widespread buy-in the contractor will not receive the value in the service that he/she would get if all underground facilities were registered.

In BC a number of utility companies and municipalities belong to BC One-Call. Unfortunately there are a number of other utilities and municipalities that have yet to become members. This results in a system that requires a contractor to call, not just BC One-Call but also every other facility owner that is not a member. Such a situation creates unnecessary inefficiencies and greatly increases the risk that a facility owner will be missed potentially leading to an accident.

In addition to supporting BC One-Call the BC Construction Association supports the Common Ground Alliance for this province. Stakeholders and the government are working together to develop common practices for doing locates that promote public and worker safety. Currently some underground facility owners simply provide as-builts to contractors who are then expected to find the lines/cables on their own. This is viewed as an inappropriate method for locating by every other jurisdiction in North America as it is deemed to be unsafe. Drawings can easily be wrong and should not be relied upon for identifying underground facilities. It places undue liability upon the contractor who must rely on these drawings, and opens the door to potential accidents occurring. Locating is considered an industry in the USA and individuals doing locates are expected to be properly trained in the best practices and standards of that industry.

**We recommend that the government strongly support mandatory membership in BC One-Call and the work of the BC Common Ground Alliance.**

*The BC Construction Association represents over 1900 construction related member companies from across BC. Our member companies are both large and small, union and open-shop, and active primarily in the ICI sector.*