



Safety Reboot

Underground Services

Discussion Aid



This discussion aid has been developed to assist the person facilitating the Safety Reboot discussion on Underground Services. It provides pointers to get conversation going and is not a full explanation of all health and safety requirements related to this subject and should not be relied on as such.

1. Can you name types of underground services?
Gas, water, electricity, telecommunications, drains and sewers.
2. Why do underground services present a significant risk?
They cannot be seen and they are potentially dangerous if inadvertently damaged
3. What dangers are related to underground services?
Damage to underground services can cause fatal or severe injury, explosions, electric shock as well as significant disruption and environmental damage; it can also delay the project and incur considerable costs
4. What should be done before undertaking any activity that breaks the surface of the ground?
Risk assessment supported by a plan of work/method statement.
5. Who should be contacted for location of services before undertaking any activity that breaks the surface of the ground?
Public and private utilities should be contacted for existence of services in the area. Manager/supervisor may need to be consulted. Do not always rely on the information provided as it could be out of date.
6. How would you locate underground services on site?
Use a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT), trial holes and review existing drawings.
7. What are visual warning signs that there are underground services in the area?
Markings, meter and fuse boxes, electricity pillar boxes, consumer units, utility indicator markers and manhole covers.
8. Before undertaking any activity that breaks the surface of the ground what must be issued and approved by the principal contractor?
Permit to break ground/dig
9. What are safe digging practices?
Toothless bucket used to gently scrape ground. Use trial holes to confirm position of service. Power tools or machinery should not be used within 0.5m of pipes or cables, hand digging with insulated tools should be used. Excavate alongside the services and then digging horizontally to expose as it greatly reduces the risk of damage through downwards pressure. Use of banksman
10. What would you do if there is a service strike on site?
**Cease works immediately
Refer to site emergency procedures for details to contact service providers
Keep everyone clear of area**