

Safe System of Work for Digging

These Guidelines apply to all work that involves penetrating the ground at or below surface level.

When working near buried services use

Maps
CAT – Cable Avoidance Tool
Safe Digging Practice
Company Policies & Procedures

All 4 complement each other

Always be aware that the depth of cover may be very shallow and that there may be no bricks, warning tape or other protection in place. Always assume that there will be more services than you expect to find.

BEFORE You Start Digging

- ✓ Complete Job Site Safety Plan.
- ✓ Ensure you have appropriate **Maps**
- ✓ **Remember** that service connection cables & pipes from the main to buildings or public lights may not be shown.
- ✓ **Look out for Services**
- ✓ Always use **Cable Locator (CAT)** to trace all services
- ✓ **Mark** the positions of the cables & pipes using waterproof crayon, chalk or paint
- ✓ **Highlight & Assess the Hazards** and ensure all relevant staff are aware of the hazards, especially when electric cables and/or gas mains are in vicinity of work area.

Manhole Covers, Valve Covers, Lamp Posts, Houses/buildings, Meters, Communications Network, Signs of Previous Digging

Inspect Site Location. Look for indications of services

Mark the location of services on the surface before digging

Plans and Maps should be available & used on site before digging

Always assume that there will be more services than you expect to find

Cable Locator should always be used (in Power & Radio modes) before starting work and throughout the course of the work

Take Care. Wherever possible, hand dig close to buried services.

Observe **'SAFE DIGGING PRACTICE'** detailed overleaf

WORK USING 'SAFE DIGGING PRACTICE'

1. Wherever possible, **Hand Dig** near buried services
2. Take special **CARE** using picks or insulated crowbars
3. Wear **Gloves** & other appropriate **PPE** (*Personal Protective Equipment*)
4. Do not use hand held power tools within 0.5 metres of marked position of electricity cables unless the no. of services makes it impossible or surface obstructions reduce the space available.
5. Do not use hand held power tools **directly** over marked line of cable **UNLESS**
 - (a) You have already found the cable at that position by careful hand digging beneath the surface AND it is at a safe depth (at least 300mm) below the bottom of the surface to be broken **OR**
 - (b) Physical means have been used to prevent the tool striking it.
6. When the surface has been broken out, use Cable Locator again to re-confirm the position of services. *Frequent and repeated use should be made of CAT during the course of the work.*
7. Before using a mechanical excavator in the vicinity of electricity cables, trial holes should first be excavated by careful hand digging. Confirm the depth of the cable(s) at the point of work. The excavator should not be operated within a radial distance of 300mm from the cable(s).
8. When using a Mechanical Excavator in the vicinity of electricity cables keep everyone clear of bucket and the excavator while it is digging
9. Where an electric cable is embedded in concrete, arrange for the cable to be **SWITCHED OUT** before breaking off concrete.
10. Do not use exposed electricity cables as a convenient step or hand hold.
11. Do not handle or attempt to alter the position of exposed electricity cables (unless under the direction of approved ESB personnel). **Extreme care should be taken where joints have been exposed.**
12. If an electricity cable, gas pipe or high pressure water mains suffer any damage, however slight, the owner should be informed immediately and people should be kept well clear of the area until it has been made safe by the owner.
13. Backfill around services with sand and use appropriate utility warning marker tape. Do not build into manhole or other structure or encase in concrete.