

Chapter 8a

Damage to Underground Utility Facilities

54-8a-2 Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

- (1) "Association" means two or more operators organized to receive notification of excavation activities in the state, as provided by Section 54-8a-9.
- (2) "Backfill" means soil or material that is approved for the soil or material's intended use and meets a project's plans and specifications.
- (3) "Business hours" means the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.
- (4) "Board" means the Underground Facilities Damage Dispute Board created in Section 54-8a-13.
- (5) "Electronic positive response system" means an automated information system, operated by the association, that allows excavators, locators, operators, and others to communicate the status of an excavation notice.
- (6) "Emergency" means an occurrence or suspected natural gas leak necessitating immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential public services.
- (7) "Excavate" or "excavation" means an operation in which earth, rock, or other material on or below the ground is moved or displaced by tools, equipment, explosives, or demolition.
- (8) "Excavation notice" means a communication that:
 - (a) has a location request assignment;
 - (b) provides notice of a person's intent to excavate in a specified location in the state; and
 - (c) meets the requirements of Section 54-8a-4.
- (9) "Excavator" means any person that excavates or conducts excavation activities.
- (10) "48 hours" means a 48-hour period, occurring during business days that includes any day except Saturday, Sunday, or a holiday, that begins at 8:00 a.m. on the first business day after notice has been submitted.
- (11) "Hand tool" means an implement:
 - (a) powered by hand; or
 - (b) designed to avoid damaging an underground facility, including a vacuum excavation tool and air knife.
- (12) "Holiday" means all legal holidays as defined in Section 63G-1-301, the Friday after Thanksgiving Day, December 24th, and any other association observed holiday as posted in the association's excavator's guide.
- (13) "Location" means the site of a proposed area of excavation described:
 - (a)
 - (i) by street address, if available;
 - (ii) by the area at that street address to be excavated; and
 - (iii) as specified in Subsection 54-8a-4(3) or 54-8a-5(2)(b)(ii); or
 - (b) if there is no street address available, by the area of excavation using any available designations, including a nearby street or road, an intersection, GPS coordinates, or other generally accepted methods.
- (14) "Location request assignment" means a number assigned to a proposed excavation by the association upon receiving an excavation notice.

- (15) "Mark" means to locate and indicate the existence of a line or facility according to the guidelines published by the association in the association's current version of the excavator's guide.
- (16) "Municipality" means the same as that term is defined in Section 10-1-104.
- (17) "No response notice" means notice given by an excavator to the association that:
- (a) describes indications of specific facilities or facility types;
 - (b) indicates that the facilities or facility types were not marked by the operator at the site of the proposed excavation; and
 - (c) is submitted after the excavator previously submitted an excavation notice regarding the site.
- (18)
- (a) "Operator" means a person that owns, operates, or maintains an underground facility.
 - (b) "Operator" does not include an owner of real property where underground facilities are:
 - (i) located within:
 - (A) the owner's property; or
 - (B) a public street adjacent to the owner's property, a right-of-way adjacent to the owner's property, or a public utility easement adjacent to the owner's property;
 - (ii) used exclusively to furnish services to the owner's property; and
 - (iii) maintained under the operation and control of that owner.
- (19) "Person" includes:
- (a) an individual, government entity, corporation, partnership, association, or company; and
 - (b) the trustee, receiver, assignee, and personal representative of a person listed in Subsection (19)(a).
- (20) "Sewer lateral cleanout" means a point of access where a sewer lateral can be serviced.
- (21) "Tolerance zone" means the area surrounding a facility that:
- (a) for an underground facility that has the diameter of the facility marked, is the distance of one half of the marked diameter plus 24 inches on either side of the designated center;
 - (b) for an underground facility that does not have the diameter of the facility marked, is 24 inches on either side of the outside edge of the mark indicating a facility; or
 - (c) for an above ground facility, is 24 inches in each direction of the outside edge of the physically present facility.
- (22) "24 hours" means a 24-hour period, excluding hours occurring during a Saturday, Sunday, or a holiday.
- (23) "Underground facility" means personal property that is buried or placed below ground level for use in the storage or conveyance of any of the following:
- (a) water;
 - (b) sewage, including sewer laterals;
 - (c) communications, including electronic, photonic, telephonic, or telegraphic communications;
 - (d) television, cable television, or other telecommunication signals, including transmission to subscribers of video or other programming;
 - (e) electric power;
 - (f) oil, gas, or other fluid and gaseous substances;
 - (g) steam;
 - (h) slurry; or
 - (i) dangerous materials or products.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-3.5 Excavation-related information included with construction and building permit.

An entity issuing a permit for building or construction that may require excavation may, and is encouraged to, include a notice on or with a permit stating, "Attention, Utah law requires any excavator to notify the owner of underground facilities 48 hours before excavating and comply with Utah Code Title 54, Chapter 8a, Damage to Underground Utility Facilities."

Enacted by Chapter 344, 2008 General Session

54-8a-4 Notice of excavation.

- (1)
 - (a) Before excavating, an excavator shall notify each operator with an underground facility in the area of the proposed excavation.
 - (b) The requirements of Subsection (1)(a) do not apply:
 - (i) if there is an emergency;
 - (ii) while gardening; or
 - (iii) while tilling private ground.
- (2) The notice required by Subsection (1) shall:
 - (a) be given:
 - (i) by telephone;
 - (ii) by electronic communication; or
 - (iii) by other means acceptable to the association;
 - (b) be given not:
 - (i) less than 48 hours before excavation begins; or
 - (ii) more than 14 days before excavation begins; and
 - (c) include the proposed excavation's anticipated:
 - (i) location, with reasonable specificity;
 - (ii) dimensions; and
 - (iii) type.
- (3) If the proposed excavation's anticipated location and dimensions cannot be described as required under Subsection (2)(c) or as requested in accordance with Subsection 54-8a-5(2)(b), an excavator shall outline the proposed excavation site using as a guideline the then-existing Uniform Color Code and Marking Guidelines, Appendix B, published by the Common Ground Alliance, as amended in the current version of the excavators' guide published by the statewide association established in Section 54-8a-9.
- (4) If more than one excavator will operate at the same excavation site, each excavator shall provide the notice required by this section.
- (5) Notice provided to the association constitutes notice to each operator that has facilities within the proposed excavation site.
- (6)
 - (a) Notice given under this section is valid for 21 days from the day on which the notice is given.
 - (b) If an excavation will continue beyond the 21-day period under Subsection (6)(a), the excavator shall provide notice of that fact at least 48 hours, but no sooner than seven calendar days, before expiration of the 21-day period.
 - (c) A notice under Subsection (6)(b) is valid for 21 days from the day on which the previous notice expires.
 - (d) An excavator shall give notice as provided in this Subsection (6) for the duration of the excavation.
- (7)
 - (a) An excavator shall confirm before excavation that:

- (i) operators that utilize electronic positive response have responded through the association's electronic positive response system; and
- (ii)
 - (A) all facilities that may be affected by the proposed excavation have been marked;
 - (B) the operators have indicated that there are no underground facilities within the proposed excavation site; or
 - (C) the operators have not requested a meeting under Subsection 54-8a-5(2).
- (b) If an operator has not marked a facility or responded within 48 hours of the initial excavation notice:
 - (i) the excavator may not begin excavation if the excavator is aware of or observes indications of a facility that was not marked at the proposed excavation area until:
 - (A) the excavator has given a no response notice; and
 - (B) the operator makes arrangements for the facility to be marked by the operator; or
 - (ii) the excavator may begin excavation if there are no visible indications of a facility within the proposed excavation area.
- (c) Within four business hours of the association receiving a no response notice, an operator shall mark the facilities or make arrangements for the facilities to be marked.
- (8) If markings made by the operator have been disturbed so that the markings no longer identify the underground facility:
 - (a) before excavating the site an excavator shall notify:
 - (i) the association; or
 - (ii) each operator; and
 - (b) the operator shall mark the area again within 48 hours of the notification provided by the excavator under Subsection (8)(a).
- (9) Unless an operator remarks an area pursuant to Subsection (8), the excavator shall be responsible for the costs incurred by an operator to remark its underground facilities following the second or subsequent notice given by an excavator for a proposed excavation.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-5 Marking of underground facilities.

- (1) Within 48 hours of the receipt of the notice required by Section 54-8a-4, the operator shall:
 - (a)
 - (i) mark the location of the operator's underground facilities in the area of the proposed excavation; or
 - (ii) notify the excavator, by telephonic or electronic message or indication at the excavation site, that the operator does not have any underground facility in the area of the proposed excavation; and
 - (b) if the operator utilizes the association's electronic positive response system, provide a response to the association's electronic positive response system to indicate whether the operator can provide the information described in Subsection (1)(a)(i).
- (2)
 - (a) The operator is not required to mark the underground facilities within 48 hours if:
 - (i) the proposed excavation:
 - (A) is not identified in accordance with Subsection 54-8a-4(2) or is not marked as provided in Subsection 54-8a-4(3);
 - (B) is located in a remote area;
 - (C) is an extensive excavation; or

- (D) presents other constraints that make it unreasonably difficult for the operator to comply with the marking requirements of this section; or
- (ii) the operator is not able to readily locate the underground facilities from the surface with standard underground detection devices.
- (b) If the operator cannot proceed with the marking because of a situation described in Subsection (2)(a), the operator shall contact the excavator within 48 hours after the excavation notice and:
 - (i) request a meeting at the proposed excavation site or some other mutually agreed upon location; or
 - (ii) at the operator's discretion, contact the excavator and request the proposed excavation site be outlined in accordance with Subsection 54-8a-4(3).
- (c) For a situation described under Subsection (2)(a)(i), the meeting or completed outlining of the proposed excavation site constitutes the beginning of a new 48-hour period within which the operator shall begin marking the underground facilities.
- (d)
 - (i) For the situation described under Subsection (2)(a)(ii), the excavator and operator shall agree on a plan of excavation designed to prevent damage to the operator's underground facility.
 - (ii) Notwithstanding the agreement, the excavator shall proceed in a manner that is reasonably calculated to avoid damage to the underground facility.
- (e)
 - (i) An operator need not mark an underground facility the operator does not own.
 - (ii) An underground facility under Subsection (2)(e)(i) includes a water or sewer lateral or a facility running from a house to a garage or outbuilding.
- (f)
 - (i) An operator may mark the location of a known facility connected to the operator's facilities that is not owned or operated by the operator.
 - (ii) Marking a known facility under Subsection (2)(f)(i) imposes no liability on the operator for the accuracy of the marking.
- (3) Each marking is valid for not more than 21 calendar days from the date notice is given.
- (4) If multiple lines exist:
 - (a) the markings must indicate the number of lines; or
 - (b) all lines must be marked.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-5.5 Determining the precise location of marked underground facilities.

- (1) An excavator may not use any power-operated or power-driven excavating or boring equipment within the tolerance zone unless:
 - (a) the excavator determines the exact location of the underground facility by excavating with hand tools to confirm that the excavation will not damage the underground facilities; or
 - (b) the operator provides an excavator with written or electronic notice waiving the requirement that the excavator determine the exact location of the underground facilities by excavating with hand tools.
- (2) Power-operated or power-driven excavating or boring equipment may be used for the removal of any existing pavement if there is no underground facility contained in the pavement, as marked by the operator.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-5.8 Excavator access.

An excavator may enter or access an owner's property or dwelling to locate a sewer lateral with the owner's permission.

Enacted by Chapter 209, 2009 General Session

54-8a-6 Duties and liabilities of an excavator.

- (1) Damage to an underground facility by an excavator who excavates but fails to comply with Section 54-8a-4, is prima facie evidence that the excavator is liable for any damage caused by the negligence of that excavator.
- (2)
 - (a) An excavator is not liable for a civil penalty under this chapter if the excavator has:
 - (i) given proper notice of the proposed excavation as required in this chapter;
 - (ii) marked the area of the proposed excavation as required in Section 54-8a-4;
 - (iii) complied with Section 54-8a-5.5; and
 - (iv) complied with Section 54-8a-7.
 - (b) An excavator is liable for damage incurred by an operator if:
 - (i) the operator complies with Section 54-8a-5; and
 - (ii) the damage occurs within the tolerance zone.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-7 Notice of contact or damage -- Repairs.

- (1) An excavator performing an excavation that results in contact or damage to a facility shall:
 - (a) provide notice of the contact or damage including the location and nature of any damage immediately to the operator;
 - (b) allow the operator reasonable time when considering the safety of the area, and the availability of materials, labor, or equipment, to make or coordinate necessary repairs before completing the excavation in the immediate area of the facility; and
 - (c) delay any backfilling in the immediate area of the contacted or damaged facility until the operator authorizes the excavator to resume backfilling.
- (2) After receiving notification of contact or damage to a facility, the operator, or qualified personnel authorized by the operator, shall:
 - (a) expedite a response to examine the contacted or damaged facility; and
 - (b) make or coordinate necessary repairs to the contacted or damaged facility within eight business hours or notify the excavator that the repairs will take longer than eight business hours due to safety or availability of materials, labor, or equipment.
- (3)
 - (a) An excavator that is responsible for an excavation where any contact or damage to a facility results in the discharge of electricity or escape of any flammable, toxic, or corrosive gas or liquid, or that endangers life, health, or property shall:
 - (i) immediately notify:
 - (A) emergency responders, including 911 services; and
 - (B) the facility operator; and
 - (ii) take reasonable measures to protect the excavator, other persons, property, and the environment until the operator or emergency responders arrive.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-7.5 Third-party damages caused by failure to mark a facility.

- (1) If an operator fails to mark a facility as required by this chapter and an excavator damages another operator's facility of a similar size and appearance that fits surface markings, the operator who failed to mark the operator's own facility is liable for the costs of damage to the facility caused by the excavator if:
 - (a) the excavator complies with Sections 54-8a-4, 54-8a-5.5, and 54-8a-6; and
 - (b) the excavator demonstrates that the damage is the direct result of the operator's failure to mark the operator's own facility.
- (2) An excavator who damages a third-party operator's facility as described in Subsection (1):
 - (a) shall pay for the costs of repairing the damaged facility; and
 - (b) may seek recovery of the costs of damage from the operator that failed to mark the operator's own facility.
- (3) Resolution of a dispute under this section may be in accordance with Section 54-8a-13.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-8 Civil penalty -- Exceptions -- Other remedies.

- (1) A civil penalty may be imposed for a violation of this chapter as provided in this section.
- (2) A civil penalty under this section may be imposed on:
 - (a) any person that violates this chapter in an amount no greater than \$5,000 for each violation with a maximum civil penalty of \$100,000 per excavation; or
 - (b) an excavator that fails to provide notice of an excavation in accordance with Section 54-8a-4 in an amount no greater than \$500 in addition to the amount under Subsection (2)(a), regardless of whether the excavation resulted in damage to a facility.
- (3) Notwithstanding Subsection (2)(a), a penalty under this chapter may not be imposed on an excavator or operator unless the excavator or operator fails to comply with this chapter and damages an underground facility.
- (4) The amount of a civil penalty under this section shall be made taking into consideration the following:
 - (a) the excavator's or operator's history of any prior violation or penalty;
 - (b) the seriousness of the violation;
 - (c) any discharge or pollution resulting from the damage;
 - (d) the hazard to the health or safety of the public;
 - (e) the degree of culpability and willfulness of the violation;
 - (f) any good faith of the excavator or operator; and
 - (g) any other factor considered relevant, including the number of past excavations conducted by the excavator, the number of location requests made by the excavator and the number of location markings made for the excavator or by the operator.
- (5) "Good faith," as used in Subsection (4)(f), includes actions taken before the filing of an action for civil penalty under this section to:
 - (a) remedy, in whole or in part, a violation of this chapter; or
 - (b) mitigate the consequences and damages resulting from a violation of this chapter.
- (6)
 - (a) A civil penalty may not be imposed on an excavator if the damage to an underground facility results from an operator's:

- (i) failure to mark;
 - (ii) inaccurate marking or locating of the operator's underground facilities; or
 - (iii) failure to comply with Section 54-8a-5.
- (b) In addition to or in lieu of part of or all of a civil penalty, the excavator or operator may be required to undertake actions that are designed to prevent future violations of this chapter, including attending safety and compliance training, improving internal monitoring and compliance processes and procedures, or any other action that may result in compliance with this chapter.
- (7) Subsection (1) does not apply to an excavation made:
- (a) during an emergency, if reasonable precautions are taken to protect any underground facility;
 - (b) in agricultural operations;
 - (c) for the purpose of finding or extracting natural resources; or
 - (d) with hand tools on property owned or occupied by the excavator.
- (8)
- (a) A civil penalty under this section is in addition to any damages that an operator or an excavator may seek to recover.
 - (b) In an action brought under this section, the prevailing party shall be awarded its costs and attorney fees as determined by the court.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-9 Association for mutual receipt of excavation notices.

- (1)
- (a)
 - (i) Two or more operators may form and operate a statewide association providing for mutual receipt of notice of excavation activities.
 - (ii) When an association is operational, notice to the association shall be given pursuant to Section 54-8a-4.
 - (b)
 - (i) When an association is formed, each operator with an underground facility in the state shall become a member of the association and participate in it to:
 - (A) receive an excavation notice submitted to the association;
 - (B) receive the services furnished by it;
 - (C) pay its share of the cost for the service furnished; and
 - (D) provide electronic positive response information to the association's electronic positive response system, if the system is utilized by the operator.
 - (ii) If an operator does not comply with Subsection (1)(b)(i) and Section 54-8a-5, the operator is liable for damages incurred by an excavator who complies with this chapter's requirements.
- (2) The association's notification center shall:
- (a) notify members and participants in the relevant geographic area within 24 hours after receiving an excavation notice;
 - (b) maintain a record of any notice received for a period of five years to document compliance with the requirements of this chapter; and
 - (c) implement and operate a statewide electronic positive response system.
- (3) The association and its notification center shall not be responsible for:
- (a) resolving reports of alleged violations of this chapter; or
 - (b) a failure on the part of an excavator or operator to perform an excavator's or operator's responsibilities under this chapter.

- (4) An association contacted by a public agency to identify a utility company, in accordance with Section 54-3-29, shall provide the public agency with a list, including contact information to the extent available, of each utility company of which the association is aware that has a utility facility within the area identified by the public agency.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

54-8a-9.5 Inspection of records.

The books and records of an association shall be open to inspection by its members during normal business hours upon 48 hours advance notice.

Enacted by Chapter 198, 1998 General Session

54-8a-10 Installation of nonmetallic facilities.

Any operator installing a nonmetallic facility, such as a sewer, water, or fiber optic line, shall install the nonmetallic facility so that it can be located with standard underground facility detection devices or in a concrete conduit system.

Amended by Chapter 344, 2008 General Session

54-8a-10.5 Installation and location of sewer lateral cleanouts -- Records.

- (1)
- (a) An operator or person installing or replacing a sewer lateral cleanout beginning August 1, 2009 shall install or replace the sewer lateral cleanout in a manner so that the lateral can be located, including:
 - (i) house sheets; or
 - (ii) electronic markers.
 - (b) An operator or person installing a sewer lateral cleanout shall notify the sewer operator of the sewer lateral cleanout location for record keeping purposes.
- (2) Beginning on August 1, 2009, a sewer operator shall maintain records identifying where all new, replaced, or contractor-identified sewer lateral cleanouts are located within the sewer operator's jurisdiction.
- (3)
- (a) A sewer operator shall provide to an excavator information in the sewer operator's possession pertaining to a sewer lateral cleanout location within the sewer operator's jurisdiction.
 - (b) The sewer operator shall provide the information within 48 hours of the excavator's request.

Enacted by Chapter 209, 2009 General Session

54-8a-11 Applicability of federal law.

The following persons are subject to the provisions of Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 198, Regulations for Grants to Aid State Pipeline Safety Programs, including those provisions relating to damage to underground facilities:

- (1) an operator, to the extent subject to the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002, 49 U.S.C. 60101 et seq.;
- (2) an excavator; and
- (3) the association.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session

Effective until 7/1/2024

54-8a-12 Enforcement -- Attorney general.

- (1)
 - (a) The attorney general may bring an action in the district court located in the county in which the excavation is located to enforce this chapter.
 - (b) The right of any person to bring a civil action for damage arising from an excavator's or operator's actions or conduct relating to underground facilities is not affected by:
 - (i) a proceeding commenced by the attorney general under this chapter; or
 - (ii) the imposition of a civil penalty under this chapter.
 - (c) If the attorney general does not bring an action under Subsection (1)(a), the operator or excavator may pursue any remedy, including a civil penalty.
- (2) Any civil penalty imposed and collected under this chapter shall be deposited into the General Fund.

Enacted by Chapter 344, 2008 General Session

Effective 7/1/2024

54-8a-12 Enforcement -- Attorney general.

- (1)
 - (a)
 - (i) The attorney general may bring an action in a court with jurisdiction under Title 78A, Judiciary and Judicial Administration, to enforce this chapter.
 - (ii) Notwithstanding Title 78B, Chapter 3a, Venue for Civil Actions, the attorney general shall bring the action described in Subsection (1)(a)(i) in the county in which the excavation is located if the attorney general brings the action in the district court.
 - (b) The right of any person to bring a civil action for damage arising from an excavator's or operator's actions or conduct relating to underground facilities is not affected by:
 - (i) a proceeding commenced by the attorney general under this chapter; or
 - (ii) the imposition of a civil penalty under this chapter.
 - (c) If the attorney general does not bring an action under Subsection (1)(a), the operator or excavator may pursue any remedy, including a civil penalty.
- (2) Any civil penalty imposed and collected under this chapter shall be deposited into the General Fund.

Amended by Chapter 158, 2024 General Session

54-8a-13 Underground Facilities Damage Dispute Board -- Arbitration -- Relationship with Public Service Commission.

- (1) There is created within the commission the Underground Facilities Damage Dispute Board to arbitrate, or parties may mutually agree to mediate, a dispute arising from:
 - (a) an operator's or excavator's violation of this chapter; and
 - (b) damage caused by excavation during an emergency.
- (2) The board consists of five members appointed by the governor as follows:
 - (a) one member from a list of names provided to the governor by a group representing operators;
 - (b) one member from a list of names provided to the governor by the Associated General Contractors;

- (c) one member from a list of names provided to the governor by Blue Stakes of Utah;
 - (d) one member from a list of names provided to the governor by the Utah Home Builders Association; and
 - (e) one member from the Division of Public Utilities.
- (3)
- (a) A member of the board:
 - (i) shall be appointed for a three-year term; and
 - (ii) may continue to serve until the member's successor takes office.
 - (b) At the time of appointment, the governor shall stagger the terms of the members to ensure that approximately 1/3 of the members of the board are reappointed each year.
 - (c) A vacancy in the board shall be filled:
 - (i) for the unexpired term; and
 - (ii) in the same manner as the board member is initially appointed.
 - (d) The board shall select an alternate for a specific board member to serve on a specific case if it becomes necessary to replace a member who has a conflict of interest because a dispute involves that member or that member's employer.
- (4) Three members of the board constitute a quorum.
- (5) The board may, upon agreement of the disputing parties, arbitrate or mediate a dispute regarding damages, not including personal injury damages, arising between:
- (a) an operator;
 - (b) an excavator;
 - (c) a property owner; or
 - (d) any other interested party.
- (6) At least four members of the board shall be present and vote on an arbitration decision.
- (7) An arbitration before the board shall be consistent with Title 78B, Chapter 11, Utah Uniform Arbitration Act.
- (8) The prevailing party in an arbitration conducted under this section shall be awarded its costs and attorney fees in an amount determined by the board.
- (9) A member may not receive compensation or benefits for the member's service, but may receive per diem and travel expenses in accordance with:
- (a) Section 63A-3-106;
 - (b) Section 63A-3-107; and
 - (c) rules made by the Division of Finance pursuant to Sections 63A-3-106 and 63A-3-107.
- (10) The commission shall provide administrative support to the board.

Amended by Chapter 369, 2024 General Session