



Washington's Dig Law Excavator Responsibilities

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122 was established in 1986 to protect the state's underground utility systems from damage caused by digging. Senate Bill (SB) 5627 updates dig law standards to increase safety and keep up with the changing industry.

When did the new law take effect?

The updated version of RCW 19.122 went into effect July 27, 2025. You must now follow the rules detailed below when you dig.

What has changed for excavators?

There are many changes to the old law. Now, the "excavation confirmation code," or dig ticket, must include the work-to-begin date on the notice. The code is not valid until that date.

A "work-to-begin date" is an identified date between two and ten full business days from the date the excavator contacted an 811 locator service. Business days do not include Saturdays, Sundays, and legal local, state, or federal holidays.

What else is new?

In addition to the existing toll-free telephone locate service, the State must create and maintain a web-based platform providing the same free services online.

If physical "white lining" is not possible, excavators must provide the excavation site boundaries electronically to a locator service.

What else is new? (cont.)

Excavators are now authorized to use a third-party entity, such as a general contractor, to give notice of the scheduled excavation to all facility operators. However, the excavator retains all legal duties and responsibilities for compliance with the law.

Higher penalties for pipeline damages and violations

The maximum civil penalty for a violation of the Damage Prevention Act by an excavator or facility operator that leads to damage to a hazardous liquid or gas pipeline increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

The civil penalty for a violation that does not lead to damage to a hazardous liquid or gas pipeline is capped at \$5,000 for each violation.

Excavators who dig within 35 feet of a transmission pipeline before the work-to-begin date on their notice, or before receiving a positive response, may now face misdemeanor charges.

Positive response

Starting Jan. 1, 2026, operators must provide excavators a positive response before the work-to-begin date. This includes notice for unlocatable facilities.

“Positive response” is a notification from the owner/operator of the underground facility to the one-number locator service confirming that they have completed marking, identified no facilities in the area, or provided available information regarding unlocatable facilities in response to a notice.

Design locates

Design locating is now required when anyone applies for a development permit within 700 feet of a transmission pipeline. Utilities may charge fees for design locating.



UTC Call Before You Dig



RCW 19.122

Additional Resources

UTC Dig Law	utc.wa.gov/diglaw
Virtual DIRT	bit.ly/utc-virtual-dirt
UTC Damage Prevention, Outreach and Education	360-664-1118
Washington 811	washington811.com
Common Ground Alliance	call811.com
ITIC – Online Locates	callbeforeyoudig.org

