



## AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION - HOUSTON CHAPTER

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# ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *BEFORE DIGGING BEGINS*

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Texas damage prevention law (Utilities Code Title 5, Chapter 251) in effect since October 1, 1998 requires: (1) most facility owners to join a notification (or one-call) center; (2) most excavators to call two working days before digging; and (3) the formation of a one-call center operating in Texas to share messages it receives with any other notification centers. This last provision was put in place to ensure that excavators need only make one call to notify most buried facility owners, and that facility owner or operators need only participate in one center. The Texas Excavation Safety System (TESS) is the one-call notification Center for Texas. The call to TESS is free of charge for excavators.

Steps to safer excavation operations include:

1. **CALL 800-DIG-TESS** (800-344-8377) at least 48-hour, but not more than 14-days prior to commencing digging operations. When placing the call make sure to have information such as project location (address or GPS coordinates), type and duration of work readily accessible. The important thing for excavators is to provide all information and any special instructions that may help in making sure that the right area gets marked. It is a good idea to obtain a reference number as proof of a timely marking request before ending the call.
2. **WAIT** the required amount of time before digging.  
Excavators must give a minimum 2-working day notice. Saturdays and Sundays are not included in the 2-day waiting period.
3. **RESPECT** 'locate' marks  
Identify the construction zone in white, if at all possible. If marks are removed or altered – call for a re-mark. Observe the uniform color coding for underground lines
  - White: 'Proposed Excavation'
  - Pink: 'Temporary Survey Markings'
  - Red: 'Electric power lines, cables, conduit and lighting cables'
  - Yellow: 'Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or gaseous materials'
  - Orange: 'Communication, alarm or signal lines, cables or conduit'
  - Blue: 'Potable water'
  - Purple: 'Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines'
  - Green: 'Sewer, and drain lines'
4. **DIG WITH CARE.**  
Follow safe excavating practices. Hand dig when appropriate until the exact location of underground utilities is established. Excavators who fail to call for markings could be subject to significant **FINES**.

First offense within a 12-month calendar year:	\$ 500 to \$1000
Second offense within a 12-month calendar year:	\$1000 to \$2000
Third offense within a 12-month calendar year:	\$2000 to \$5000

Additionally, excavators may be required to attend a 4-hour class on a Saturday.

Excavators should note that water and sewer utilities are not part of the TESS system. Locating these lines will require additional calls. Additionally, purple markings usually indicate the location of 84-inch diameter lines for non-potable water.

For more information visit the Texas Excavation Safety System (TESS) web site at [www.digtess.org](http://www.digtess.org) or [www.onecalltexas.com](http://www.onecalltexas.com)

**REMEMBER CALL 800-DIG-TESS (800-344-8377) BEFORE DIGGING / IT IS A FREE CALL REQUIRED BY LAW!**