



I received this e-mail from a friend after my May *Deeds* column was published:

“Let’s face it - facility ‘locating’ has been around a lot longer than subsurface utility engineering (SUE). To the people who count – the equipment operators – the definition of the term ‘locating’ is universally understood as the process of determining the approximate horizontal position of buried utility facilities and marking it with paint, flags, etc. An equipment operator could give a rat’s behind whether some egghead engineer wants to refer to that process as ‘designating’ rather than ‘locating.’ I was around when the Common Ground Alliance was debating the virtues of SUE. There was little, if any, support among the utility members for the SUE group’s definition of terms.”

I had to laugh. With his words, I could easily imagine actually being in that meeting. I am in agreement that the term “locating” is universally understood in our business. But unfortunately, locating is something that is not.

Take a look at this photo. Are these plastic pipes located? I’d say they are located. But let me ask you a series of other questions: Were the pipes located before the vacuum excavator was used? Were there two parallel markings on the ground indicating two plastic pipes? Is there any tracer wire present? Was ground penetrating radar (GPR) used to find these pipes?

It’s tough to answer these questions, isn’t it? You

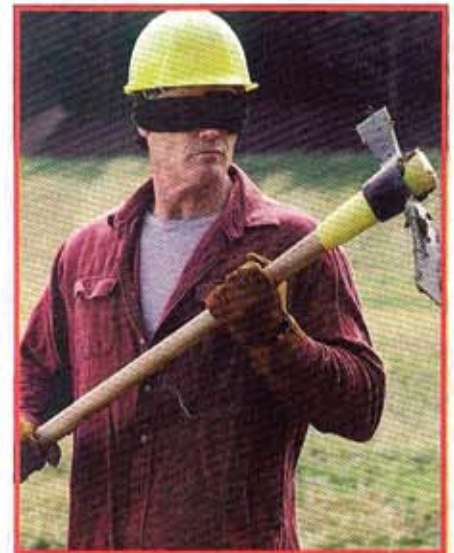
do not have enough information. What you do know is that there are two parallel plastic pipes in the ground. Two pipes have been located. They were found with at least one variety of a pipe and cable locator--a vacuum rig.

Recently, I have had some conversations with SUE people about their views of one-call damage prevention practices. Guess what? They are not the biggest fans. One went so far as to say that the damage prevention industry needs to be more attractive to smart people. Ouch!

But just as we at *Underground Focus* are attempting to change the industry’s view of pipe and cable locating instruments by blurring the line between EM and GPR, I think we’ll embark upon another mission of attempting to blur the lines between damage prevention and SUE. (In case you missed it, we’ve already started).

Now back to my friend and the consensus for not supporting SUE terms. I’ve tried to find the comprehensive and universal listing of damage prevention terms that everyone in the one-call business must use, but I am having trouble locating such a listing. Or has its location not been designated?

Please click on ViDeeds at www.underspace.com as we work to build visual definitions for terms used in finding buried pipes and cables. UF



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