

From Our Readers

Dear Publisher,

You've given away the national secret! You told everyone how to use the witching wires to find utilities that no locating instrument can find!

I really enjoyed September's "View From the Underspace". The only part I think you missed is that witching can only locate a trench. As far as I know, it will not work for directionally drilled cable or pipe. Maybe for large diameter pipe, but you have to have some volume of disturbed earth. That's the way I was taught anyway. I can't tell you how many times we had to quietly use the witching rods after we had exhausted all efforts to find a buried gas service line that had no tracer wire. Thank goodness the installations in the late 60s and early 70s were done with a trencher and we could witch for the trench.

To answer your question about how it works... Don't ask me. It just does.

Dave Price

*Director of Operations & Training
Virginia Utility Protection Service, Inc.*

Dear Publisher,

I enjoyed your article in the *Underground Focus* on locator training in the July / August issue. Lately, my focus has been on the locating process and following procedures. Depending on the distribution system, 95 to 99 percent of all locates can be performed without error if the locator follows some basic process and follows a list of written procedures. This list may include: read the ticket completely, look at a corresponding map, directly connect the transmitter, broadly sweep the area, look for other utilities, check the depth, mark with paint and paint, and fill out the paperwork including notes, sketches and/or pictures.

We talk a lot about the five to 10 percent of locates that cause problems in terms of broken tracer wire, interfering conductors,

disconnected bonds, etc., but those are the exception, not the rule. All line locators quickly go from doing 100s to 1000s of locates in a matter of months. Getting the basic locating techniques down by following a set of procedures, reduces the locate errors caused by human error. Isn't that what Operator Qualification is trying to do, reduce human error?

The baseball analogy in the article is very good and proves a number of points. At the beginning of your fictitious winter in Arizona, training to hit major league pitching, I bet the first time at bat, without instruction, you most likely would not hit a ball. Given a set of instructions or procedures to follow, like shifting your weight from your back foot to the front foot, level swing, rotate your hips, etc. by the end of your instruction, you would be able to make contact with the ball. Good enough to compete at a major league level, highly unlikely, but you would be better than when you started. Given a hundred hitters, all following a set of written procedures or guided by the same technique, would have a better outcome than a group of hitters not following a list of instructions. Tiger Woods, arguably the most gifted athlete to play golf, has changed his technique a number of times. Tiger's golfing technique is like a line locator following procedures. If Tigers does the same thing in the proper order, he will have success. If a line locator follows a list of procedures, adjusted to his circumstances, he will also find success.

Joe Berry

CenterPoint Energy

Dear Publisher,

I wanted to pass this along about one of my locators here in New Mexico. It is a great example of how a typical locator in our industry goes about his "job." Every day they go unnoticed, but for most that's ok. They are just happy to be protecting the community no matter how they are doing it.

We always say that our locators quietly and inconspicuously go about their jobs every day in a professional manner. In fact some may call them a vital part of daily life since they protect underground facilities that help us all live our normal lives and they protect all of us from injuries when we are digging near underground facilities. They do this everyday and the general public hardly even notices them.

Well, today Dave Berman, one of our locators here in Albuquerque continued to protect the public in the same quiet and inconspicuous way he goes about his job. On October 5 a house caught fire in Albuquerque early in morning. According to the article, one woman and two men (neither identified in the story) broke in to a house on fire to pull out a trapped woman. Due to the heroics of these people, the woman survived and was taken to the local hospital receiving medical treatment.

I found it unusual that Dave left the scene of the fire before the press or police got there. I found it odd he did not leave his name with anyone, so when he was telling me about what happened this morning, I asked him why? Why did you leave? You are a hero! You are the one that pulled the woman out of the house, but you didn't stick around to let everyone know. Why not?

Dave's reply to me was "I don't really care about all of that. I do not need the attention or the praise. All I care about is that the lady is ok." Dave continued to say "all of this happened on my way to work and we have a lot to do today." He did manage to sneak back to the house to quietly ask how the woman he pulled from the fire was doing. When Dave found out she was going to be ok, he slipped away to work. He is out there now marking a utility line quietly and inconspicuously, perhaps saving an accident from happening and saving another life.

Mike Marrero

*Regional Manager-Southwest
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