

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1999

S

1

SENATE BILL 906\*

Short Title: Underground Utility Damage Amend.

(Public)

---

Sponsors: Senator Lee.

---

Referred to: Judiciary II.

---

April 14, 1999

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO AMEND THE UNDERGROUND DAMAGE PREVENTION ACT.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Article 8 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

**"ARTICLE 8.**

**"UNDERGROUND DAMAGE PREVENTION.**

**"§ 87-100. Short title.**

This Article shall be known as the "Underground Damage Prevention Act".

**"§ 87-101. Definitions.**

As used in this Article:

(1) ~~"Association" means an association, sponsored by utility owners, that will provide for receipt of notification of excavation operations in a defined geographical area, and that will maintain the records of the notifications.~~

(2) "Damage" includes the substantial weakening of structural or lateral support of an underground utility, penetration or destruction of protective coating, housing, or other protective device of an underground utility, and the partial or complete severance of an underground utility.

- 1           (2a) "Emergency" means a sudden or unexpected occurrence involving an  
2           imminent danger, demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate  
3           loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential service.
- 4           (3) "Excavate" or "excavation" means an operation for the purpose of the  
5           movement or removal of earth, rock, or other materials in or on the  
6           ground by use of equipment operated by means of mechanical power  
7           and/or an operation by which a structure or mass of material is wrecked,  
8           razed, moved, or removed by means of any tools, equipment, or  
9           discharge of explosives. This term includes road construction but does  
10          not include road maintenance activities within rights-of-way of a  
11          highway, including those maintenance activities defined by the rules  
12          and regulations of the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
- 13          (4) "Highway" has the meaning set out in G.S. 20-4.01 as the same shall be  
14          amended from time to time.
- 15          (4a) "Inclement weather" means an act of God that creates a weather  
16          condition that prevents the placement of temporary markings as required  
17          by G.S. 87-102.
- 18          (5) "Location of underground utilities" means a strip of land not wider than  
19          the width of the underground utility plus ~~two and one-half (2 1/2) feet~~ 18  
20          inches on either side of the outside edge of the underground utility.
- 21          (5a) "Member" means a utility owner who is a member of the notification  
22          center established in G.S. 87-101.1.
- 23          (5b) "Notification center" means the notification center established in G.S.  
24          87-101.1.
- 25          (6) "Person" means a corporation, individual, copartnership, company,  
26          association, or any combination of individuals or organizations doing  
27          business as a unit, any subdivision or instrumentality of the State, and  
28          includes any officer, agent, trustee, receiver, assignee, lessee, or  
29          personal representative of any of the above entities.
- 30          (7) "Person financially responsible" means that person who ultimately  
31          receives the benefits of any completed excavation activities, including a  
32          person owning or leasing real property or holding an easement or  
33          interest in an easement.
- 34          (8) "Public spaces" means any area owned by the State or any of its political  
35          subdivisions or dedicated for public use.
- 36          (9) "Road construction" means the actual building of a new highway; or the  
37          paving, grading, widening, relocation, reconstruction, or other major  
38          improvement of a substantial portion of an existing highway.
- 39          (10) "Road maintenance" means preservation, including repairs and  
40          resurfacing of a highway, not amounting to road construction.
- 41          (11) "Street" has the meaning set out in G.S. 20-4.01 as the same shall be  
42          amended from time to time.

1 (12) "Underground utility" means any underground line, system or facility  
2 used for producing, storing, conveying, transmitting, or distributing  
3 communication or telecommunication, electricity, gas, petroleum and  
4 petroleum products, coal slurry, hazardous liquids, water under  
5 pressure, steam, or sanitary sewage, but not including traffic signal  
6 control cables and vehicle detection cables of the North Carolina  
7 Department of Transportation.

8 (13) "Utility owner" means any person who owns or operates an underground  
9 utility.

10 (14) "Work day" means every day except Saturday, Sunday, national legal  
11 holidays and State legal holidays.

12 **"§ 87-101.1. Establishment of notification center.**

13 (a) Utility owners shall establish a single notification center to provide for the  
14 receipt of notification of excavation operations throughout the State and to maintain a  
15 database, provided by its members, that includes the geographic areas in which its  
16 members desire transmissions of notices of proposed excavations, and which has the  
17 capability to transmit notices of proposed excavations to its members by teletype,  
18 telecopy, electronic mail, facsimile, or telephone.

19 (b) The notification center shall be operated as a nonprofit corporation, and each  
20 utility owner shall be a member of that corporation by using and participating in the  
21 notification system. The membership of the corporation shall elect a board of directors,  
22 through which the notification center shall perform its duties. At least ten percent (10%)  
23 of the seats on the board of directors shall be held by units of local government.

24 (c) In order to fund the operation of the notification system, the notification center,  
25 through its board of directors, may assess each member an amount reflecting the cost of  
26 that member's participation in the system.

27 (d) The board of directors of the notification center shall provide the Governor, the  
28 President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
29 with an annual progress report on the operation of the notification system provided for in  
30 this Article by March 1 of each year.

31 **"§ 87-102. Notice required prior to excavation.**

32 (a) Except as provided in G.S. 87-106, before commencing any excavations in  
33 highways, public spaces or in private easements of a utility owner, a person planning to  
34 excavate shall notify ~~each utility owner having underground utilities located in the proposed~~  
35 ~~area to be excavated,~~ the notification center either orally or in writing, not less than two nor  
36 more than 10 working days prior to starting, of his intent to excavate.

37 (b) The written or oral notice required in subsection (a) shall contain:

38 (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the person filing the  
39 notice;

40 (2) The name, address, and telephone number of the person doing the  
41 excavating;

42 (3) The anticipated starting date of the excavation;

43 (4) The anticipated duration of the excavation;

- 1 (5) The type of excavation to be conducted;
- 2 (6) The location of the proposed excavation; ~~and~~
- 3 (7) Whether or not explosives will be ~~used~~-used; ~~and~~
- 4 (8) Whether or not boring, drilling, tunneling, ramming, or punching will
- 5 take place.

6 (c) If the notice required by this section is made by telephone, an adequate record  
7 shall be made ~~of the notification by the utility owners or the utility association and the person~~  
8 ~~making the notification,~~ by the notification center to document compliance with this  
9 section.

10 (d) A notice shall be valid for 10 working days from the time of notification. Two  
11 working days before the end of the 10 working days, or at any time when the  
12 underground utility location markings on the ground become illegible or are destroyed,  
13 the excavator shall request a remarking of the underground utility locations. The utility  
14 owner shall remark the locations as soon as possible after such a request, but in any event  
15 the remarking shall be completed within 48 hours after the request to remark is received,  
16 barring inclement weather.

17 **"§ 87-103. Effect of permit on liability.**

18 A permit authorizing excavation operations and issued pursuant to law or ordinance  
19 shall not relieve a person of the responsibility of complying with this Article.

20 **"§ 87-104. Requirements of person doing excavation.**

21 (a) Except as provided in G.S. 87-106, no person may excavate in a highway, a  
22 public space, or a private easement of a utility owner without first having given the notice  
23 required in G.S. 87-102 to the utility owners.

24 (b) In addition to the notification requirements, each person excavating shall:

- 25 (1) Plan the excavation to avoid damage and to minimize interference with
- 26 underground utilities in and near the construction area, to the best of his
- 27 abilities;
- 28 (2) Maintain a clearance between an underground utility and the cutting
- 29 edge or point of any mechanized equipment, taking into account the
- 30 known limit of control of that cutting edge or point, as is reasonably
- 31 required to avoid damage; ~~and~~

32 (2a) Take reasonable steps to protect any underground utility lines when  
33 excavating within 18 inches of either side of the outside edges of the  
34 marked location of a utility owner's underground facilities, as defined in  
35 G.S. 87-101(5). This protection shall include hand-digging, air-jetting,  
36 or vacuum excavation, or other means of safe excavation designed to  
37 avoid damage to the facility marked until that facility is exposed or is  
38 determined to be below the proposed excavation. If a proposed  
39 excavation lies adjacent or parallel to an existing facility and within or  
40 partially within the 18-inch area, the existing facility shall be exposed  
41 prior to beginning the excavation. Once the facility is exposed and the  
42 location markings are found to be correct, the excavation may proceed  
43 with mechanized equipment.

- 1 (3) Provide support for the underground utilities in or near the construction  
2 area, including backfill, as may be reasonably required by the utility  
3 owner for the protection of the underground utilities.

4 ~~"§ 87 the excavation.~~

5 ~~The person financially responsible shall provide to the person responsible for doing~~  
6 ~~the excavating, the names of all underground utility owners in the area of the proposed~~  
7 ~~excavation. The names of the utility owners may be obtained from the County Register of~~  
8 ~~Deeds or the Building Inspection Department of the political subdivision in which the~~  
9 ~~excavating is taken place, if there is one.~~

10 "§ 87-105.1. Requirements of notification center.

11 (a) The notification center shall, upon receiving notice of the intent to excavate,  
12 notify all members whose underground lines are located in the area of the proposed  
13 excavation. The notification center shall also indicate the names of those utilities being  
14 notified to the person intending to excavate.

15 (b) If the notification required by this act is made by telephone, a voice recording  
16 of the notification shall be maintained by the notification center to document compliance  
17 with the notification requirement and those records shall be maintained for at least 48  
18 months.

19 (c) The notification center shall provide statewide operations coverage and a  
20 single, nationally accessible toll-free telephone number to receive and record the  
21 information provided by excavators and to respond to information requests from  
22 excavators.

23 "§ 87-106. Exceptions. Exemptions.

24 The following excavations are exempted from the notification requirements of this  
25 Article:

- 26 (1) Tilling of soil for agricultural purposes;  
27 (2) ~~Excavation by a utility owner, by the State or its subdivisions or~~  
28 ~~agencies, or by anyone contracting with any of these entities to perform~~  
29 ~~the excavation, owner or road maintenance activities by the Department~~  
30 ~~of Transportation described in G.S. 87-101(3) on or within an easement,~~  
31 ~~right-of-way, or property owned or controlled by any of these entities,~~  
32 ~~where:~~  
33 a. ~~Only the facilities of the utility owner doing the excavating are~~  
34 ~~permitted; or~~  
35 b. ~~All persons having an interest in the excavation and the~~  
36 ~~underground utilities that may be damaged during the excavation~~  
37 ~~have agreed in writing to provide the equivalent of the~~  
38 ~~notification required by this Article among themselves; or~~  
39 where only the facilities of the utility owner doing the excavating are  
40 permitted;  
41 (3) The replacement of a pole as long as the replacement pole is within  
42 three feet of the original pole and within the line of existing poles. This  
43 exception shall not apply to poles at highway intersections or at the

1 crossings of highways and permanently marked transmission  
2 underground ~~utilities.~~ utilities; and

- 3 (4) In the case of an ~~emergency~~ emergency, ~~involving danger to life, health,~~  
4 ~~or property requiring immediate correction, or in order to continue the~~  
5 ~~operation of a major industrial plant, or in order to assure the continuity~~  
6 ~~of utility services,~~ excavations immediately required to repair or  
7 maintain the needed service may be made, without using explosives, if  
8 notice is given to the ~~utility owner or association~~ notification center as  
9 soon as is reasonably possible; except that the prohibition against the  
10 use of explosives shall not apply to the North Carolina Department of  
11 Transportation. Performance of emergency excavation shall not relieve  
12 the excavator of liability for damages.

13 **"§ 87-107. Duties of the utility owners.**

14 (a) Every utility owner having underground utility lines, including units of local  
15 government, shall be a member of the notification center.

16 (b) Each utility owner, or his designated ~~representative including an association,~~  
17 representative, notified of an intent to excavate shall, before the proposed start of  
18 excavating (unless another period is agreed to by the person conducting the excavation  
19 and the utility owner or their representatives), provide the following information to the  
20 person excavating to the extent such information is reflected by records in the possession  
21 of and reasonably available to the utility owner:

- 22 (1) The location ~~and description~~ of all of the underground utilities which  
23 may be damaged as a result of the excavation; and  
24 (2) ~~The location and description of all utility markers indicating the location~~  
25 ~~of the underground utilities; and~~  
26 (3) Any other information that would assist in locating and avoiding  
27 damage to the underground utilities, including providing temporary  
28 markings when necessary indicating the location of the underground  
29 utility in locations where permanent utility markers do not exist.

30 **"§ 87-108. Absence of utility location.**

31 Should any utility owner who has been given notice pursuant to G.S. 87-102 fail to  
32 respond to that notice as provided in G.S. 87-107, or fail to properly locate the  
33 underground utility, then the person excavating is free to proceed with the excavation.  
34 Neither the excavator nor the person financially responsible for the excavation will be  
35 liable to the nonresponding or improperly responding utility owner for damages to that  
36 utility owner's facilities if the person doing the excavating shall exercise due care to  
37 protect existing underground utilities when there is evidence of the existence of those  
38 underground utilities near the proposed excavation site.

39 **"§ 87-109. Recording requirements for ~~associations.~~ the notification center.**

40 ~~An association.~~ The notification center shall record with the Register of Deeds of each  
41 county in which participating utility owners own or operate underground utilities, a  
42 notarized document providing the telephone number and address of the ~~association,~~  
43 notification center, a description of the geographical area served by the ~~association,~~

1 notification center, and a list of the names and addresses of the utility owners receiving  
2 these services from the ~~association~~-notification center.

3 **"§ 87-110. Recording requirements for utility owners.**

4 (a) Each utility owner having underground utilities in North Carolina shall record  
5 a notarized document containing the name of the utility owner and the title, address, and  
6 telephone number of its representatives designated to receive the written or oral notice of  
7 intent to excavate, with the Register of Deeds of each county in which the utility owner  
8 owns or operates underground facilities. This document shall be executed by an officer of  
9 the utility owner or in the case of a governmental entity, the authorized official.

10 (b) Any change or modification of the information recorded by a utility owner,  
11 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, shall be made by recording the corrected  
12 information with the Register of Deeds of each county to which the change or  
13 modification applies, in the manner required by subsection (a) of this section within five  
14 days of the change made to the utilities.

15 (c) For purposes of the recordings required by subsections (a) and (b) of this  
16 section, recordings by ~~an association~~-the notification center pursuant to G.S. 87-109 shall  
17 satisfy the recording requirements for each utility owner who is a member of the  
18 ~~association~~-notification center while that utility owner remains a member of the  
19 ~~association~~-notification center.

20 (d) Upon receipt of the documents recorded pursuant to subsections (a), (b), or (c)  
21 of this section, the Register of Deeds shall place the documents in the Grantor's Index  
22 under the heading "Underground Utilities". The registration fee imposed by Chapter 161  
23 of the General Statutes shall apply to these documents.

24 **~~"§ 87e~~departments.**

25 ~~A copy of any document or modification or change in the information in that~~  
26 ~~document recorded pursuant to G.S. 87-109 or G.S. 87-110 shall be filed with any county~~  
27 ~~or municipal inspection department having jurisdiction over any area where the~~  
28 ~~underground utilities are located. Such inspection departments shall maintain these filings~~  
29 ~~in alphabetical order in an accessible form.~~

30 **"§ 87-112. Color-coding.**

31 When the location of an underground utility is marked with ~~stakes~~-stakes, flags, or  
32 paint, or by other physical means, pursuant to this Article, the utility owner shall use  
33 temporary colored markers-markings following the American Public Works Association  
34 Uniform Color Code for Utilities.

35 **"§ 87-113. Notification required when damage done.**

36 (a) The person doing an excavation that results in any known damage to an  
37 underground utility shall, immediately after the discovery of the damage, notify the utility  
38 owner of the location and nature of the damage and shall allow the utility owner  
39 reasonable time to repair the damage before completing the excavation in the immediate  
40 area of the damaged underground utility.

41 (b) The person responsible for conducting any excavation that results in damage to  
42 an underground utility where the damage may endanger life, health, or property shall,  
43 immediately after the discovery of the damage, take action to protect the public and

1 property, notify the utility owner, notify the police or fire departments, and take any other  
2 actions to minimize the hazards until the arrival of the utility owner's personnel, the  
3 police, or the fire department. The excavator shall delay any backfilling in the immediate  
4 area of the damaged underground utility until authorized by the utility owner unless it is  
5 necessary to prevent injury or property damage to others. Repair of any damage shall be  
6 performed by the utility owner or by qualified personnel authorized by the utility owner.

7 **"§ 87-114. Homeowners.**

8 This Article does not require utility notification before a property owner digs in any  
9 area on his own property with nonmechanized equipment nor prior to tilling the soil for  
10 agricultural, gardening or landscaping purposes. Mechanized equipment may be used,  
11 without utility notification, in any area on the owner's property with the exception of  
12 recorded underground utility easements which describes the location of the easement  
13 with specificity.

14 **"§ 87-115. Requests for survey locates and design locates.**

15 The information required for requests for facility locates in conjunction with survey or  
16 design activities shall be the same as specified in G.S. 87-102. The utility owners  
17 receiving requests for survey locate or design locate work shall respond to the request  
18 within 10 working days.

19 **"§ 87-116. Civil penalties.**

20 (a) A person who violates the provisions of G.S. 87-102(a), 87-104(b), or 87-  
21 107(a) is subject to a civil penalty as follows:

22 (1) Upon the first violation by that person, two hundred fifty dollars  
23 (\$250.00);

24 (2) Upon the second violation occurring within the same 12-month period  
25 as the first violation, five hundred dollars (\$500.00); and

26 (3) Upon the third violation occurring within the same 12-month period as  
27 the first violation, one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

28 (b) An action under this section may be initiated by any person making a  
29 complaint in writing, verifying by oath and having reason to believe that a violation has  
30 occurred.

31 (c) Prosecution of violations shall be brought by the district attorney for the  
32 prosecutorial district in which the violation arose or in the county in which the defendant  
33 resides or in which the defendant's principal place of business is located.

34 (d) All civil penalties recovered under this section shall be paid into the General  
35 Fund.

36 (e) The civil penalties provided for in this section do not apply to the State of  
37 North Carolina or to units of local government.

38 **"§ 87-117. High-speed locate.**

39 If the utilities in conflict with a proposed excavation have been located in accordance  
40 with G.S. 87-102 and a change in plans is necessitated by unforeseen conditions, a  
41 request for a "high-speed locate" to be made within four hours can be made for the  
42 alternate contiguous location. The high-speed locate shall be paid for by the person  
43 making the request at a price established by the notification center. Persons desiring to



1 obtain high-speed locates shall register with the notification center in January of each  
2 year."

3           Section 2. This act becomes effective July 1, 2000.