

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES COLOR CODES

January 1, 2011 marked my tenth year with Nebraska Rural Water Association. As many of you know, among other things, I have been providing leak detection services for most of those ten years. When I first started the best way to find a leak was with a ground microphone, at best, this was a hit and miss operation. Several years ago the association was able to acquire a leak correlator through the help of the Department of Health and Human Services, this dramatically increased our accuracy in finding leaks. Nebraska Rural Water Association has since purchased a correlator thanks to the generous donations to the equipment fund by many water systems across the state.

After a water leak has been correlated is when the real work begins. Typically I can pinpoint a leak to a certain area to be excavated, that is when I ask the million dollar question, anything buried here?

Diggers hotline has been around since 1994. It is law that you call before you dig. The Nebraska hotline number is 811 or 1-800-331-5666. There is a 48 business hour waiting time to allow other utilities in the affected area to mark their lines. Usually on a small leak waiting the 48 business hours is not a problem. In the case of a water main break waiting may not be an option. You may have to call in an emergency locate. According to the Diggers Hotline of Nebraska's website, an emergency means any condition which constitutes a clear and present danger to life, health, or property or which demands immediate action to prevent or repair a major service outage. The proposed excavation site should be marked by white flags.

After all of the other utilities have marked their underground lines you may end up with a sea of colored flags. Knowing what these flags and their corresponding colors mean will be a great benefit when excavating your water or sewer line. The following chart is from the American Public Works Association Uniform Color Code. It may be helpful to become familiar with this color code. You can also visit Nebraska Diggers Hotline on the internet at www.ne-diggers.com.

American Public Works Association Uniform Color Code

RED	Electric power lines, cables or conduits, and lighting cables.
YELLOW	Gas, oil, steam, petroleum or other hazardous liquid or gaseous materials.
ORANGE	Communications, cable TV, alarm or signal lines, cables, or conduits.
BLUE	Water, irrigation, and slurry lines.
GREEN	Sewers, storm sewer facilities, or other drain lines.
WHITE	Proposed excavation
PINK	Temporary survey markings.
PURPLE	Reclaimed water, irrigation and slurry lines.