



TSSA Fuels Safety Program	Ref. No.: FS-140-08	Rev. No.:
NOTICE REGARDING UNDERGROUND FUEL LINES	Date: October 16, 2008	Date:

Subject: Notice Regarding Underground Fuel Supply Lines
Sent to: Fuel Oil Advisory Council, Natural Gas Advisory Council, Propane Fuels Advisory Council, Propane Risk Reduction Group, Interprovincial Gas Advisory Council (IGAC), Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance (ORCGA) Members

Notice Regarding Underground Fuel Supply Lines

The Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) would like to advise those who excavate, or contract with a building owner to excavate or perform ground disturbances, to look for any potential source of fuel usage on the property prior to disturbing the soil.

Two recent strikes to underground fuel supply lines have resulted in the unfortunate deaths of two and injuries to two others.

On July 30, 2008, a residential explosion in Niagara Falls killed one occupant and injured another when a landscaper drove a bar into the ground, installing a 'rail tie' wall. The bar punctured a propane service line, running from the home to a pool heater, and the escaping gas migrated to the residence. The gas built up to an explosive level, and found a source of ignition.

More recently, another residential explosion in Georgian Bluffs killed one occupant and injured another when a propane supply line was severed during construction activity.

Any activity that disturbs the soil, such as digging, driving bars in the ground, installing sprinkler systems, etc., could damage these lines. Their depth may change over time due to erosion or changes in the landscape, so do not take *any* chances even if your activity is relatively shallow.

If you see a barbeque, pool heater, gas fire pit, infra-red heater or any other indication of fuel use, ascertain the fuel type and source. If the fuel source is not apparent (such as a cylinder at the appliance), investigate further prior to excavation. You could be over a fuel pipe and hitting one could be disastrous. Hire the services of a private locate company if unsure. While fuels are safe – when sealed tight inside that pipe – they can lead to disastrous consequences if the underground pipe is damaged.

If a leak occurs, even through what may seem to be a minor scrape of a pipe from a shovel or backhoe, it can spread long distances and ignite, if near a flame or spark, causing a fire or deadly explosion. Underground fuel supply lines are designed to keep the gas or fuel oil safely inside. In order to stay that way, there are certain rules for digging.

If planning to excavate, contact your local utility for the location of all nearby pipelines. A simple call will quickly and easily get your underground utility lines marked. Check the paperwork left by the locator to ensure it covers your dig area, and make sure you understand all the markings. If not, discuss it with the locator.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Unknown to the local utility, there may also be underground residential supply lines – for a pool heater or barbeque – installed by a contractor at the request or under contract with the homeowner.

As per TSSA's gaseous fuels regulations, all underground piping must be locatable. While a homeowner should be asked for locations, they may not have accurate and complete information. If unsure of any underground line, contact a private locator (under 'Cable Detection, Installation and Splicing' in the Yellow Pages or Google 'Private Locates' in your area).

As a final note on locates: markers only indicate the presence of a pipeline. They should not be used or relied upon to determine the exact location of a pipeline. With that in mind, you must carefully hand dig within three feet (or one metre) of those markings as required by law under TSSA's Guidelines for Excavations (available from www.safetyinfo.ca under free downloads, and www.tssa.org within the Fuels document search section).

Even if you happen to cause what seems to be only minor damage to a buried utility pipeline, notify the utility company immediately. A gouge, scrape, dent or crease to the pipe or coating may cause a future break or leak, so don't cover it up. Do not attempt to squeeze off the break or control the flow of gas — you could cause an explosion. Applying pressure to the pipe could potentially cause a static spark, ignite the gas and create a catastrophic explosion.

It is imperative that the utility company, and only those qualified to do so, inspect and repair any damage to the line – for everyone's safety. If you become aware of such an incident or potential incident, please contact your local utility immediately.

Pipeline hits as a whole have decreased for the fourth year in a row in Ontario, thanks to the efforts of TSSA, the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance and various industry stakeholders, but there is still a way to go yet. With your help, we'll keep the gas flowing – safely in the pipe *underground* where it belongs. You dig?

If you have any questions about this or other propane safety issues, feel free to contact TSSA at **1-877-682-8772**. Please post the attached Ontario One-Call sign in your area as an important reminder of underground utility locates.

About TSSA

TSSA is an innovative, self-funded, non-government organization focused on delivering public safety services. It provides not-for-profit regulatory safety services in industry sectors such fuels, amusement devices, elevating devices, boilers and pressure vessels, operating engineers, and upholstered and stuffed articles. The organization's vision is to be the world leader in public safety services.



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

To arrange for free natural gas pipe location service at your site,
call Ontario One-Call five working days in advance.

1-800-400-2255

www.tssa.org
www.orcga.com