



# The Most Common Cause of Utility Damage Isn't Bad Locates

FROM THE FIELD • DEREK HOYLE • MARCH 06, 2026

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Utility locating provides critical information—but it has limits. When teams treat markings as guarantees rather than guidance, the risk of damage increases.

The most effective damage prevention doesn't come from blaming the locate. It comes from understanding its role and knowing when additional steps are required.

Verification, inspection, and communication between trades are what close the gap between markings on the ground and safe excavation.

Most utility strikes aren't equipment failures. They're decision failures.

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