

# **Difficult-to-Locate (DTL) / Project Locate Flag**

USIC Locating Services, LLC – Illinois (Revised October 21, 2019)

USIC continues to experience numerous damages on extensive projects where excavators dig beyond our current marks for ongoing locates, dig before Difficult-to-Locate situations have been resolved, or dig before Emergency locates have been completed.

The failure to contact the excavator and notify them of the DTL situation, and the absence of any marks or indicators on site identifying the facilities aren't located, will lead the excavator to believe it is safe to dig.

The most common reasons for this are:

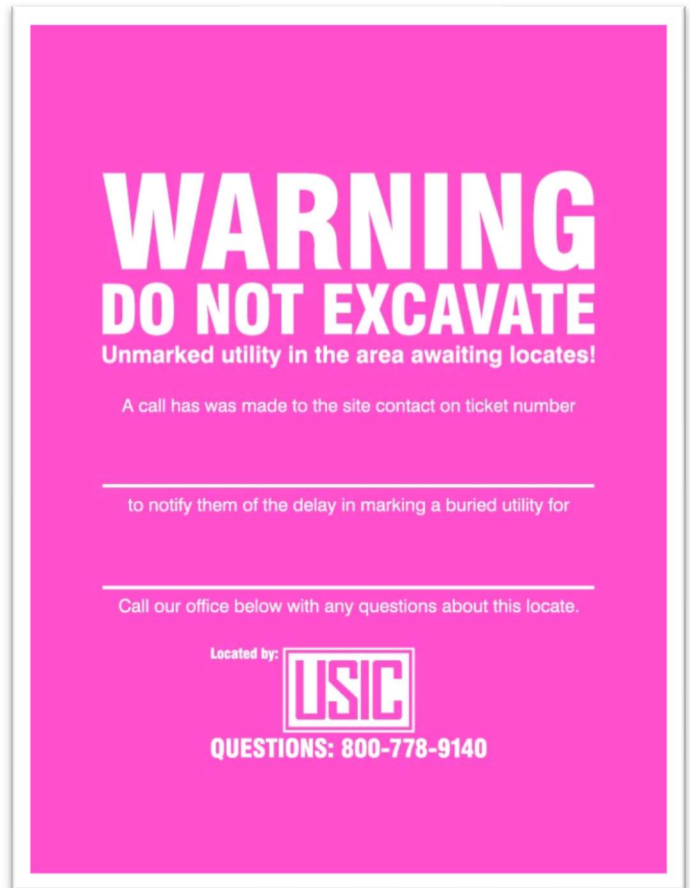
- Failure to document the agreed upon scope and timeline on an Electronic Alternate Locate Agreement (EALA)
- Contractor production demands forcing them to move ahead of our marks
- Contractor assigned a different crew unfamiliar with prior work agreements
- Emergency Locate Requests where the locator leaves the immediate area to hook up, and the excavator assumes the locates are complete and begins to dig.

The risk of damage to unprotected pipe and cable on **DTL situations**, not-yet-marked utilities on extensive **project locates, and emergency locates** has led USIC to implement a pink, on-site warning flag for excavators, notifying them of these unmarked facilities. This practice is similar to the current flag used at Nicor and Ameren for their unmarked facilities on DTL locates. This **DOES NOT** replace their policy. We will continue to use their DTL flags for the respective processes; although, we must use the pink flag for areas along extensive project locates awaiting ongoing marks.

## **Difficult-to-Locate Use**

USIC has an effective Second Set of Eyes and Escalation Process, as well as a High Profile Facility Locate Process. When utilized properly, they provide the highest level of protection to our customers' critical infrastructure. These processes must be followed fully prior to using one of the pink DTL/Project flags.

- Mark all other utilities on site
- Exhaust all troubleshooting opportunities to locate the cable through conventional means
- Follow all High Profile and Second Set of Eyes/Escalation Process steps
- Document the DTL notification call to your supervisor in TicketPro
- Document the DTL call to the excavator in TicketPro and provide them with contact phone numbers
- Place the pink flag, complete with documentation, at the locate site and photograph for TicketPro



- Write the locate ticket number on the flag
- Write the utility company name of the DTL facility on the flag
- Bend the top of the flag staff at 90-degrees so it hangs down and can be easily read
- Place the flag in a highly visible location in proximity to the not-marked facility
  - **You may need to consider the use of a second flag in a more visible location on the jobsite if the area in question is obscured by permanent structures/objects, the size of the jobsite does not allow visibility from the area in question, or if there are multiple areas with incomplete markings. Use your best judgement in identifying where to put any additional Pink Flags to ensure they are visible to the excavator.**
- Photograph the flag placement and information on the flag/s at the site



- The responding supervisor/ lead tech will remove the flag/s once the facility has been properly marked
- If it remains difficult to locate after exhausting all internal means, the flag/s should remain on site and the supervisor must escalate to the respective utility

### **Extensive Project Locate Use**

Use of the DTL/Project flag will complement our current, existing policies and practices of thorough documentation, communication and completed EALA's on project locates. The flag does not substitute or replace any of these expectations. It is an addition to these practices, serving as an on-site reminder and warning of the need for continued markings within the scope of an extensive locate request where a revisit to the site will be necessary to complete the work. We must continue to follow all current project locate practices.

- Attend all scheduled excavator meetings, agreeing upon what will be marked and when
- Document all conversations in TicketPro, including contact names and phone numbers
- Complete an EALA.
  - Include timelines for what must be marked and by when for the entire scope of the request
  - Record the contact information for both USIC and the excavator (site contact) on the form
  - Schedule times for regular follow up when necessary
  - Discuss the need for remarks in specific areas if locate paint is obliterated by traffic or weather
- Escalate all concerns to a supervisor and document the conversations in TicketPro
- **If the locate requires multiple site visits to complete the scope of the request, use the pink flag**
  - **If the excavator is already on site when you arrive to continue marking for the project, immediately place the pink flag in the area of the unmarked facilities, photograph it, and communicate to the excavator that there are unprotected facilities. Let them know that you will remove the flag and communicate to them when they are able to dig.**
    - Write the ticket number and utility names represented by USIC on the flag
    - Bend the top of the flag staff at 90-degrees so it hangs down and can be easily read
    - Place the flag in a highly visible location near the end of your incomplete locate markings

- ***You may need to consider the use of a second flag in a more visible location on the jobsite if the area in question is obscured by permanent structures/objects, the size of the jobsite does not allow visibility from the area in question, or if there are multiple areas with incomplete markings. Use your best judgement in identifying where to put any additional Pink Flags to ensure they are visible to the excavator.***
  - Photograph the placement of the flag/s and information on the flag/s at the site
  - If repeated visits will be necessary, reuse the flag/s, moving it to the end of the next day's marks
  - Once the locate is complete, the flag/s must be removed

### **Emergency Locates**

- **If upon arrival to an Emergency Locate Request the excavator is already digging, or anytime during the course of the locate the excavator arrives and begins staging for excavation, place the pink flag in the area of excavation, and communicate to the excavator that there are unprotected facilities in the area.**
  - Photograph the placement of the pink flag
  - Complete the locates required in the area
  - Remove the pink flag
  - Communicate to the excavator that they can proceed with excavation
  - Document all step taken in the locators notes section in TicketPro.

Please contact your supervisor, trainer or district manager with any questions regarding the pink DTL/Project Locate Flag and thank you for your cooperation in protecting these highly vulnerable, not-marked facilities.