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Washington Dig Law For Realtors

Remember to call 8-1-1 before you dig—even for real estate signs.

Washington's dig law, [RCW 19.122](#), protects the state's vital underground utility infrastructure from damage caused by digging.

What are the basics?

You are required to call 811 for a free utility locate at least two business days before starting any digging project. You can also request a locate online at www.callbeforeyoudig.org. Digging cannot begin until the locate has been completed.

How does this effect the real estate industry?

When installing any type of sign, including those used for real estate, a locate must be requested. Residential yards have numerous underground utility lines that can be damaged when installing a sign. Not only is damaging an underground utility costly, it also poses a safety hazard.

The law requires excavators **outline dig areas in white paint** prior to calling for a locate. This reduces the amount of markings in the yard and ensures the locate is performed correctly.



Consumer Protection
888-333-WUTC (9882)
consumer@utc.wa.gov

Education & Outreach
360-664-1118

PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250
www.utc.wa.gov

Dig Law—Realtor Responsibilities

What is considered excavation?

The law defines excavation as: “any operation, including the installation of signs, in which earth, rock, or other material on or below the ground is moved or otherwise displaced by any means.” (RCW 19.122.010(8))

Does the law apply to homeowners?

Yes. Homeowners are required to follow the requirements of the law. An exemption allows property owners or occupants of noncommercial property to dig fewer than 12 inches without requesting utility locates. This exemption also applies to employees of the property owner.

How does the “call before you dig” work?

After you provide information about your project, 811 will notify and coordinate all of the utilities that have facilities in your area. The utilities will come out and mark your dig site with paint or flags indicating the location and type of any underground lines. After the two business days have passed and all utilities have been marked, you are free to dig.

How is the law enforced?

Enforcement of the dig law is complaint driven. A safety committee hears complaints of alleged violations and recommends enforcement action to the commission. The UTC or Washington Attorney General’s Office would issue any enforcement action, including penalties, if necessary.

If a sign is installed without first requesting a locate and a utility is damaged, the excavator is at risk of having a complaint brought against them by the utility.

What are the penalties for violating the dig law?

An individual found in violation of RCW 19.122, may be subject to the following penalties:

- Dig without calling two days in advance, pay a \$1,000 fine.
- Dig without calling and damage a utility, pay a \$10,000 fine and triple the repair costs.
- Dig within 35 feet of a transmission pipeline without calling, risk being found guilty of a misdemeanor.
- Dig without calling and damage a transmission pipeline, pay a \$10,000 fine, triple repair costs and spend 30 days in jail.

What do I do if there is something wrong with my locate?

If your locate is late, inaccurate, or incomplete, you can file a complaint with the Dig Law Safety Committee online at forms.digsafewashington.com/file-a-complaint.

If you would like more information, call (360) 664-1118 or visit www.utc.wa.gov/diglaw.



Resources

Online locates

www.callbeforeyoudig.org

Washington 811

www.washington811.com

Dig Safe Washington

www.digsafewa.com