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From: Carl Henning (CLCP), Safety Coordinator, STAR Energy Services

Date: September 21, 2018

Re: Excavating Within a Tolerance Zone¹

STAR recommends you follow Gopher State One Call (GSOC) regarding excavating within a tolerance zone.

Excavators are required to maintain a minimum horizontal (side to side) clearance of 2 feet (24") between an unexposed facility and the cutting edge or point of any power operated excavating or earthmoving equipment.

For example: if the markings indicate a 20" pipe is buried, the hand dig zone is 68" wide (24" + 20" + 24"). If excavation is required within the hand dig zone, the excavation must be performed very carefully. Consider the use of vacuum excavation or hand tools. The excavator is also responsible to excavate without damage to the facility or undermining the lateral support. Excavators are reminded that the depth of an underground facility may vary due to installation practices, changes in grade, frost, erosion and other variables. Therefore, any depth readings given by a locator, if given at all, are only an estimation of the depth of the facility and the excavator is still responsible to safely expose the facility without damage.

Hand Dig with Care

Minnesota Law requires the use of hand tools (or vacuum excavation) when excavation will take place within the Tolerance Zone. GSOC reminds you to use care when you are excavating within this "Hand-Dig Tolerance Zone." Respect the marks to protect yourself and the integrity of underground facilities. GSOC accepts all locate requests from excavators who plan on using only hand tools.

GSOC also advises you that although hand tools are exempt from the requirement to contact GSOC before you excavate, it is highly recommended for you to have underground facilities marked even when using hand tools. The use of hand tools may pose a threat to you, others, and underground facilities. Damages have occurred to underground facilities when working with metal objects that are pounded or screwed into the ground, even by hand. For example, tent stakes, anchor bolts, form pins, metal probes, survey stakes, hand augers, political signs, and many other objects use sharp metal ends capable of damaging underground facilities.

See next page for diagrams.

¹ 2017 Handbook, Gopher State One Call (GSOC), pages 25-27.

Safety Recommendation

