



THE FLOW N' GO

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INSTALLING A FENCE IN YOUR YARD? PLANTING A TREE? CALL DIGSAFE—IT'S THE LAW

We have all seen them: those colorful paint markings that seem to magically appear on our streets and sidewalks. These markings are not graffiti left by vandals. They actually serve a very important purpose.

Whenever anyone—utility companies, homeowners, *anyone*—does any digging, they are required by law to notify DigSafe.

DigSafe is a private, not-for-profit organization that serves as a call center to collect information from homeowners and contractors about upcoming excavation projects. DigSafe then notifies all utilities (water and sewer departments, electric utilities, telephone companies, cable companies, gas utilities, and the like) so that they can mark the location of their underground services.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 82, Section 20 defines excavation as “an operation for the purpose of movement or removal of earth, rock, or the materials in the ground including, but not limited to, digging, blasting, auguring, backfilling, test boring, drilling, pile driving, grading, plowing in, hammering, pulling in, jacking in, trenching, tunneling, and demolition of structures, excluding excavation by tools manipulated only by human power for gardening purposes and use of blasting for quarrying purposes.”

(Massachusetts, unlike some other states, requires that Dig Safe be called not only when digging into the ground but also when ever backfilling earth.)

If you are planning to install a fence, plant shrubs, dig out an old tree stump, remove boulders, or do any work in your yard that involves digging (or adding fill) on your property, you need to call DigSafe at least 72 hours (not including weekends and holidays)

before starting the work. DigSafe will then notify all utilities, which will determine if they have any pipes or wires buried beneath your property.

If a utility does have anything running through your yard they will dispatch someone who will mark out the location of where the lines enter your property so that the homeowner won't damage the utilities. This is done at no cost to the homeowner—fees are paid by the utilities for this service.

Those markings that the utilities leave is the paint that you see on our streets. And the color of paint that is used isn't just random. Each utility has a designated color that they must use to identify the location of their lines.

-  Red marks electric power lines
-  Yellow marks gas, oil, or steam
-  Orange marks communications
-  Blue marks potable water
-  Green marks sewers and drains
-  Purple marks irrigation
-  Pink are temporary survey marks
-  White marks proposed excavation

DigSafe has made it real easy for the person or company doing the work. All one has to do is dial 811 and they will be connected directly to DigSafe or they can call (888) DIG-SAFE. Requests for mark-outs can also be made at digsafe.com.

State law provides for stiff penalties for individuals who don't notify DigSafe and cause damage to utility lines. In Massachusetts, the fine is \$1,000 for the first offense and \$5,000 to \$10,000 for subsequent

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TIP OF THE QUARTER

It is estimated that 500 million plastic straws are used every day in America—enough to circle the earth 2.5 times. And many of them end up in our oceans. (get-green-now.com)

Want an eco-friendly alternative? Try using a straw-shaped pasta known as bucatini or perciatelli in your cold drinks.

This pasta is about 9 1/2 inches long with a hollow center, just like a straw. It can be cut to a smaller length, will hold its strength, and not affect the taste of your drinks. And it is safe for the environment.

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UPDATE:

SOME WATER AND SEWER SERVICES CONTINUE UNDER CORONAVIRUS PROTOCOLS

When the April/May/June issue of *The Flow N' Go* was published, the Coronavirus was still in it's infancy. There were more unknowns about the virus than there were facts. Every aspect of society was affected and reacted in various ways.

The Town of Marblehead, and the Water and Sewer Commission, followed the advise of the Governor and health experts and closed its offices to the public. Contact between employees was limited and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks and gloves, and the use of antibacterial products, such as sprays, wipes, and hand gels, were widely used.

Water and sewer employees were prohibited from entering homes and businesses and the way in which meter installations, inspections, real estate transfers, bill paying, and other services were done were all revised to assure the safety of the employees and the public.

Knowledge of the Coronavirus has evolved over the past few months but there are still too many unknowns for us to let our guard down. The Commission has made adjustments to our procedures as needed but it is still too soon to resume "normal" operations.

As of mid-July, access to the Water and Sewer Commission office is still restricted. Customers can **make payments** through the US mail, by using our on-line payment system, or by dropping their check in the drop-box slot located on our garage door.

If a customer needs to make a **payment in cash**, they should call the office from our parking lot to let us know

that they will be putting cash in the drop-box. An office employee will immediately retrieve the cash from the box, write a receipt, and place the receipt in our window flower box for the customer to get.

Customers' concerns and questions can be handled with a phone call to the office at 781 631-0102.

This has actually worked well and our service to the customer has not been adversely affected. The Commission is considering the installation of barriers to maintain a safe separation between customers and the staff. A decision on re-opening the office will be made at that time.

Water and sewer crews are still not entering homes and businesses. This has necessitated changes to the process for seasonal meter installations, real estate transfer inspections, and sewer deduct inspections.

Many residents have their water meter removed and stored while they spend their winters out-of-state. Typically, they would call the water and sewer office upon their return and a water technician would **re-install their meter**.

Currently, the resident must get a licensed plumber who would contact the office to set up an appointment. The plumber would be emailed a form that they must complete and return before the meter can be installed.

A water technician will meet the plumber at the location and give the meter to the plumber. The technician would remain on scene while the plumber installs the meter. The plumber will take pictures of the meter and email

them to the Commission office.

The required **inspection for real estate transfers** has been postponed, not cancelled. The seller should inspect their property for illegal connections and improper backflow devices and for meters that are not easily assessable and make any necessary corrections before the property is sold.

Both the sellers and buyers will be required to sign and return a form that states that the property has been checked and complies with current regulations and that the buyer will allow access by the water department when inspections resume. The form, and further information, is available on our website at www.marblehead.org/water.

Sewer deduct inspections, like real estate inspections, are still on hold. After the homeowner has a plumber install the deduct meter and has it inspected by the town's plumbing inspector, they must take a picture of the main meter, sewer deduct meter, the white inspection tag and a photo that shows how the deduct meter is connected. The pictures must clearly show the numbers on the measurement dial. The photos can be emailed to [water @ marblehead.org](mailto:water@marblehead.org).

The meter reading at the time the pictures were taken will be used as the starting reading for deduct purposes. No credit for usage prior to this reading will be given.

A water technician will conduct an inspection when inspections resume. If the deduct meter does not pass inspection at that time, no credit will be given until it does pass inspection and any credit already received will be voided.

CALL DIGSAFE— IT'S THE LAW

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offenses or for gas-related violations. In addition, the homeowner may be liable for the cost to repair any damage caused to the utility lines and

for any damage to surrounding properties or dwellings that is a result of the homeowners negligence of not calling DigSafe.

Don't take a risk. Make sure you call DigSafe. As DigSafe's promotional materials read, "It's Smart. It's Free. It's the Law."