



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

FROM THE FIELD • DEREK HOYLE • MARCH 06, 2026

When utility damage happens, the first assumption is often that the locate was wrong. In reality, that's rarely the full story. From the field, we see damage occur most often because decisions were made without verification. Markings were interpreted as exact locations. Depth was assumed. Changes in direction weren't confirmed. Private utilities were overlooked.

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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.

If you're planning excavation or boring work in the Charlotte area and want to talk through your specific situation before you start, we're easy to reach. Call (704) 315-5820 or visit www.cllocating.com.

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