



## Buried Utility Line Strike

**Incident Description:** On 3-31-2015 a GBI employee operating an excavator struck and ruptured a 4-inch natural gas line. The line had been located and marked by the utility company prior to GBI starting work. Instructions were given to hand dig to locate the line but a communication breakdown resulted in the operator using the excavator to continue the dig. After hitting the line, the equipment was immediately shut down and the crew evacuated the area. The leak did not ignite and no one was injured in this incident. The local utility company was able to repair the damaged line and put it back into service with little impact to the surrounding area.



### Immediate Observations:

- ✓ The crew assumed the line was at 42-inches at depth
- ✓ The operator did not follow instructions to hand dig to find the "actual" location of the gas line
- ✓ The crew used a mechanical method (i.e. a backhoe) when a safer method (i.e. hand shovel) should be used to locate underground installations

### Safety Performance Tool to Prevent Future Occurrence:

#### Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Striking a buried line can have serious and even fatal consequences
- ✓ Once pipelines are marked, respect the demarcations and dig carefully in their proximity
- ✓ Always expose underground installation by a safe and acceptable method
- ✓ In most cases hand digging will be required

#### Validating Assumptions

- ✓ Never treat assumptions as facts
- ✓ Do a hands-on/eyes-on review of the physical environment before starting critical tasks
- ✓ Assumptions are best based on preliminary or invalidated data
- ✓ Challenge preconceptions and assumptions before starting critical tasks

*Reducing Errors and Managing Defences Leads to Zero Harm*