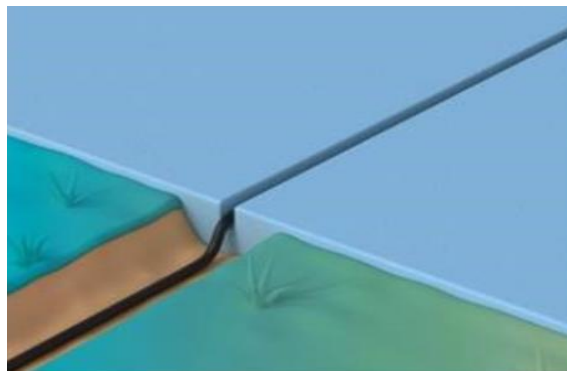


Telecommunications Service Strikes

During the month of August 2020 there were 3 service strikes that involved telecommunications cables, although strikes of telecoms cables are low risk this highlights concerns around what the process is for identifying services when breaking ground and ensuring that these processes are followed.

What you should know

- One of the two incidents involved the use of an excavator and the area had been scanned for services but no plans were referred to for telecoms, the cable strike occurred Approx. 1m deep
- Two of the incidents involved work to replace terry's and telecoms cables were located within 50mm of the surface during manual breaking of asphalt/concrete when the strikes occurred
- Not all telecoms cables have tracer cables meaning that scanning will not always pick up telecoms in the area – Although scanning should always be undertaken as a process of elimination
- Telecoms cables in some cases are installed in a "slot trenched method" where installers cut 50mm deep, slot cables into the cut and fill over the cuts made in concrete and asphalt



Slot Trench Method

Service location process

- Complete a risk assessment and look for tell-tale signs of services in the area
- Complete digging checklist when excavations are between 150mm – 1.5m deep
- Refer to service plans – even if telecoms are not usually on services plans, this is a process of elimination and in one of the incidents plans were referred to post-incident when the utility provider attended site to complete repairs and plans did in fact show telecoms in the excavation area
- Complete service location scans of the area
- Positively identify service depths in the excavation zone via potholing – Never assume that services will be at specified depths and treat the ground as live, as in a lot of cases services are buried shallower than required specifications
- Take care with excavations and when using an excavator always have a spotter when operating excavators

Telecoms cables – What to look for



- Cables running up power poles indicate services may be under ground leading to the power pole
- Cables running vertically up fences, walls etc.
- Telecoms stands and boxes in power poles etc.
- Numbering on the boxes "31-33" refers to the number of cables in the area example 31-33 indicates 3 cables in the area



- The bottom photo here shows an example where a telecoms cable has been slotted in a joint between the concrete and asphalt in a residential drive way
- The lids shown in the pictures have mains fibre running in and out of them, these cables will not always run in a straight line – excess is looped to allow for jointing in the event of service strikes (See example below)



- Look for any pre-existing service markings
- Areas of concrete or asphalt where cuts have been made and reinstated
- Telecoms pillars in the area