

## The Voice of the Networks

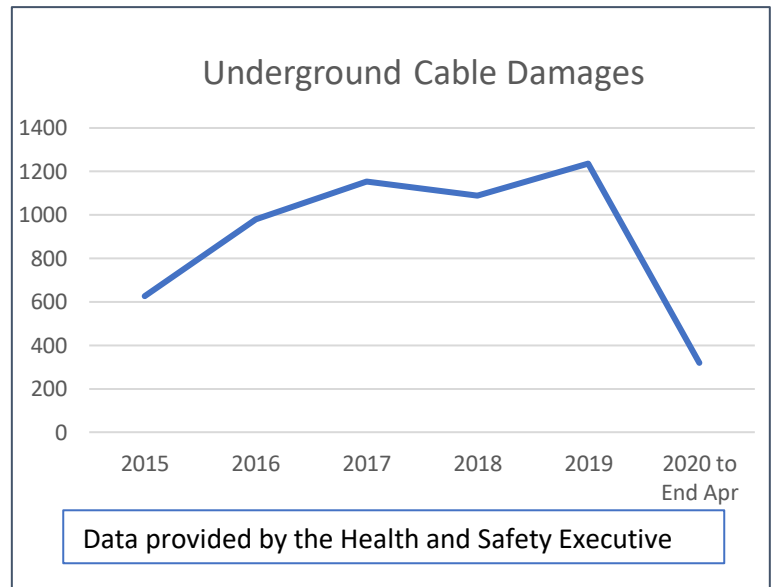
### ‘Watch Out, Cables About!’

During the COVID-19 pandemic, construction work and projects across the UK have experienced a period of downtime, affecting the amount of excavation work undertaken. As a result, energy network companies have experienced a welcome reduction in third-party damages to their buried apparatus. In reality, this reduction in damage to underground cables, gas pipelines and other utility equipment, means a reduction in the risk of harm to those involved in the damage.

As lockdown restrictions begin to ease across the UK and work levels increase, it’s essential that excavation teams remember the basic safety precautions necessary to ensure they stay safe.

When you are carrying out any excavations or work that involves breaking ground, **be aware of what is buried in the ground before you start. Work out how you are going to locate utility equipment and avoid the risk of damaging it.**

Follow the advice in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [Guidance HSG47 ‘Avoiding danger from underground services’](#) and ENA’s [‘Watch Out, Cables About’](#) Safety advice leaflet. Complete your risk assessment before starting work and share the details of this with everyone involved in the work. Further guidance and advice is available via the Utility Strike Avoidance web site: <https://www.utilitystrikeavoidancegroup.org>



### General Advice

- Be aware of the location of underground utility equipment before digging or excavating.
- Request location details and plans from Utility Companies well in advance of work starting. Remember that these are a guide only – you are responsible for confirming the exact location of all equipment and avoiding damage.
- Use a cable avoidance tool to identify the presence of buried cables before you start to dig. Rescan the area as your work progresses. Hand Dig — use safe digging techniques to dig trial holes to establish the line and depth of underground utility equipment.
- Always assume underground cables are Live. If they appear to be damaged do not approach them and contact the Network Operator using 105 for GB (or 03457 643 643 in Northern Ireland). Take care when lowering the ground levels as there may be underground cables in the area.
- If you damage an underground cable, vacate the excavation immediately, phone your electricity network operator’s emergency number and keep everybody clear.



**In an emergency dial 999** and tell them electricity is involved. Call 105 for GB (or 03457 643 643 in Northern Ireland) if you have a safety concern related to the electricity network or if you spot damage to overhead power lines, underground cables and substations that could put you, or someone else, in danger. If you are in any doubt about whether an underground cable or other piece of equipment is safe, always assume it is live, keep away from it and contact your local electricity network operator.

**Plan your work safely and help us to keep Britain’s energy flowing.**

To find the local electricity network operator, search ‘electricity distribution map’ on the ENA website at [www.energynetworks.org](http://www.energynetworks.org).