

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

**According to a Safety and Health
Information Bulletin put out by OSHA**

**Before any Drilling (HDD) can occur,
a Contractor MUST use the State's Utility Location System.**

**Why? To AVOID Explosions/Fires
and other OSHA Safety Issues**



Firefighters are on the scene of a gas explosion Tuesday at the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, MO. Tammy Ljungblad AP
[Image from 2013 - USA Today article](#)

In 2013, an HDD operation installing underground cable in Kansas City, MO., damaged a natural gas line, resulting in a fatal explosion and fire. According to [OSHA's Safety and Health Information Bulletin \(SHIB 03-13-2018\)](#), the hand-dug "potholes" along the planned drill path revealed two utility lines two feet underground. The work crew presumed that one of these two lines was the gas line that they were looking to avoid striking, even though it was at a shallower level than they expected (both lines were electrical). Without verifying their assumption, the crew drilled deeper and struck the actual gas line further below. The resulting explosion and fire severely injured three HDD workers, destroyed a restaurant, and damaged other nearby buildings. Several bystanders were injured and a restaurant worker was killed.

8 - HDD SAFETY PRECAUTION TIPS **BEFORE YOU DRILL**



#1 - Use site-specific safety assessments to determine appropriate drilling techniques and safety practices (e.g., when potholing, drilling the bore, or using a back reamer).

#2 - Contact the local utility location service to mark lines and assist with determining utility locations. Compare drawings with surface markings, as some utility lines may miss detection or may be missing from utilities maps. Verify findings with local utility companies whenever possible.

#3 - Ensure that the HDD machine operator and tracker walk through the planned drill path during planning and site preparation. Check for structures (e.g., gas meters and manhole covers) that may indicate an underground utility line, obstructions along the drill path, and potential sources of interference that could affect tracking device readings.

#4 - Use safe and appropriate potholing techniques to the planned drill path's depth to expose any hidden underground utilities.

#5 - Train HDD machine operators and trackers before starting the operation to communicate effectively with hand signals and radios.

#6 - Ensure trackers check the tracking device readings frequently during HDD operations and compare them with the pre-operational walkthrough readings. If any changes in readings occur (e.g., depth), the tracker should immediately signal the HDD machine operator to stop drilling, investigate, and take appropriate safety precautions before continuing to drill.

#7 - Instruct trackers to look into the potholes to observe the drill stem as it passes near underground utility lines during drilling, and guide the HDD machine operator along the bore path to avoid striking a line, as well as the back reamer to verify that it follows the bore path and avoids utility lines.

#8 - Drill at a pace that is slow enough to permit the tracking device to sense any drill line deflections caused by large obstructions.

[ALL TIPS DIRECTLY FROM OSHA](#)

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