



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo bill passed by Senate will help prevent underground utility accidents, injuries

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 18, 2015

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ALBANY – Legislation sponsored by Senator Joseph Griffo and passed by the New York State Senate this week would help further prevent accidents involving underground gas and electric utility lines.

Griffo's bill ([S4862B](#)) would require any municipality or underground facility operator to make sure that any excavator it hires for work will have completed the training and education programs provided by the one-call notification systems. The one-call notification system was established by the state in 2000 to enable excavators to determine the location of all underground utilities in an area where they plan to dig.

“Before excavators even start breaking ground, they should have no doubt about what utilities they may or may not encounter below the surface,” said Senator Griffo, R-Rome. “Most excavators exercise due diligence by making sure that the area is clear of any underground pipes or power lines before they start digging. But, some excavators still seriously hurt themselves or cause major inconveniences when they accidentally strike underground utilities that they could have been aware of beforehand.”

The one-call notification system, along with the Underground Facility Safety Training Account (UFSTA), has helped significantly reduce the number of accidents that occur when excavators accidentally strike an underground utility line – which can lead to significant damage, service interruptions and serious bodily harm or death.

Most excavators already receive such awareness training as part of their overall training as excavators. But most of the accidents that still do occur with underground facilities are the result of excavators who either are unaware of the one-call notification system, or choose not to utilize it.

The UFSTA receives penalty revenues from excavators or operators found to have violated provisions of law related to the State's one-call notification system. Specifically, excavators are required to contact the one-call system prior to digging and operators of underground facilities are required to accurately mark the location of their respective facilities. Revenues deposited into the UFSTA account can be appropriated for training and education on the requirements and procedures for protection of underground facilities.

This bill has been referred to the Assembly for its consideration.

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