



# Dangers of Unmarked Sewer Laterals



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

Trenchless technology, such as directional drilling, is a common practice used to install new underground utility lines. To prevent damages to underground utilities and provide for public safety, excavators, contractors and utility operators are required to have all underground utilities marked and confirmed as “no conflict” prior to beginning any project.

## Sewer Laterals Pose A Unique Problem

- Sewer laterals are typically PVC or other non- metallic materials, which make them undetectable by traditional aboveground locating equipment.
- Not knowing where these facilities are located makes them extremely vulnerable to damages during excavation and the use of trenchless technologies.

In some cases, “cross bores” may be created when underground utilities are unknowingly installed through unmarked sewer laterals with trenchless technologies. These cross bored utilities have the potential to create a sewer blockage. The act of mechanically clearing the sewer blockage may damage the natural gas line and create the potential for a natural gas accumulation and possible ignition that could result in significant damage to people and property.



The sewer lateral from the property line to the house is owned by the home owner, NOT the municipality.



A cross bore

## What Can Be Done About Unmarked Sewer Laterals?

- Amend Maryland law to require all piping that is buried or installed to connect a structure to a sewerage system be made locatable by the addition of a tracer wire. This will enable plastic sewer laterals to be located with traditional aboveground locate equipment.
- Virginia, Georgia, Oregon, Arizona, Minnesota and Wisconsin have all taken legislative action to facilitate the locating and marking of sewer laterals.
- The addition of a tracer wire to locate and mark newly installed sewer laterals is critical to address the public safety issue of cross bores.

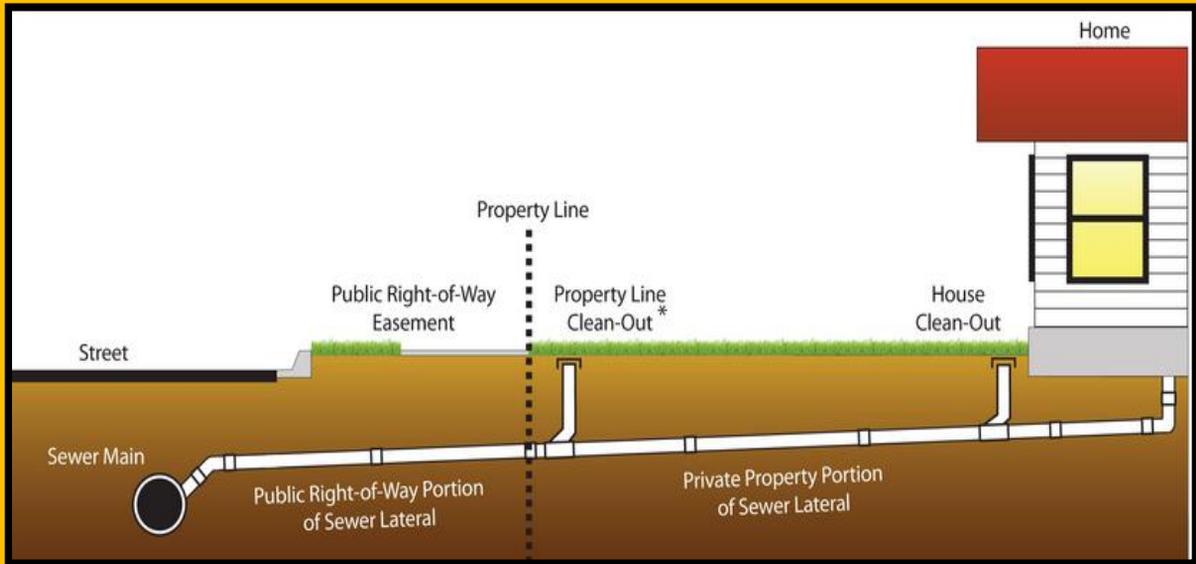




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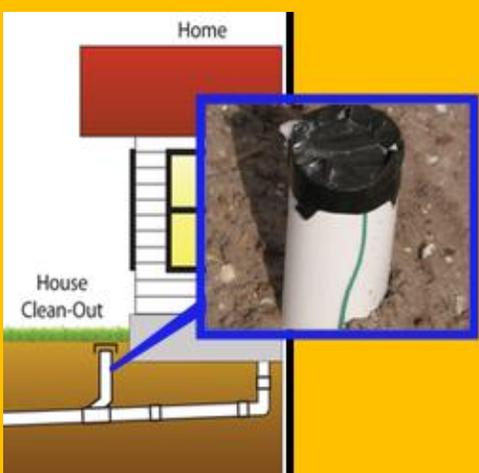
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- As shown above, the portion of the sewer lateral that is located on the home owner's property, is currently NOT required to be located under the Maryland state OneCall Law. In addition, without the requirement of a tracer wire, there is no physical way to locate these laterals with aboveground locate equipment.
- Not knowing the location of this sewer line makes it extremely vulnerable to possible cross bores and other damages.

## What Can Be Done About Unmarked Sewer Laterals?

- The addition of a tracer wire at the time of installation allows this once unlocatable sewer lateral to now be located using traditional aboveground locate equipment.
- Tracer wire can be added for pennies on the dollar at the time of installation.



- The wire terminates at the exterior cleanout as shown. In the event a cleanout is not present, the wire would terminate next to external wall of structure.