



THE IMPACT OF LATE LOCATES

Author name withheld by request

As a Health and Safety Manager for a utility contractor, I have heard from supervisors and crews that utility locates have been an ongoing issue for years. Late or incomplete locates cause constant project delays to the point where it is an institutional joke between our firm and our customers.

Upon speaking with our Locate Administrator, he was able to summarize the troubling and the very real issues that Ontario contractors face on a daily basis. His comments are summarized below.

In our line of work, we call in about 2000 tickets a year. Our Site Administrator and Supervisors have learned over the years to deal with late locates by providing the customer long lead times for project start dates; however, late locates still cause constant delays and headaches for all involved, most particularly our field staff.

While locate clearances are received within a day of the request, we estimate that approximately 85% of all our locates are late.

In our experience, locators are not seeing the requests within the five business days of the provider receiving the request. The request is then queued with the locator, meaning the locate generally isn't completed until two to four weeks after the locator was issued the request (plus an additional week from the submission of the request).

Small locates for work such as house service installations, pole installations and break and ties typically take between two to four weeks, however, these always take our Administrator hounding the LSP's to get them done. We currently have incomplete locates that are over three months old.

Some locates may have up to 10 different companies responding to a request. Some locates expire by the time we finally receive all of the locates, necessitating re-locates, which are very difficult to obtain.

This leads to the issue of Mark Preservation. While waiting for all the companies to respond to the request, paint marks will fade/disappear, and LSP's are generally not responding to re-marks to keep the locate valid, but rather are relying on the contractor to "freshen" the marks. We help where we can while we are on site, but if we haven't got there yet because we are waiting for accurate locates, this is not possible.

Generally, LSP's will not re-mark/freshen paint or flags after five days of the locate being completed. This doesn't make sense to me and most likely puts us in a position of having invalid locates. The LSP's state we need to issue a new ticket/request, which puts us in the same "late locate" situation as stated above.

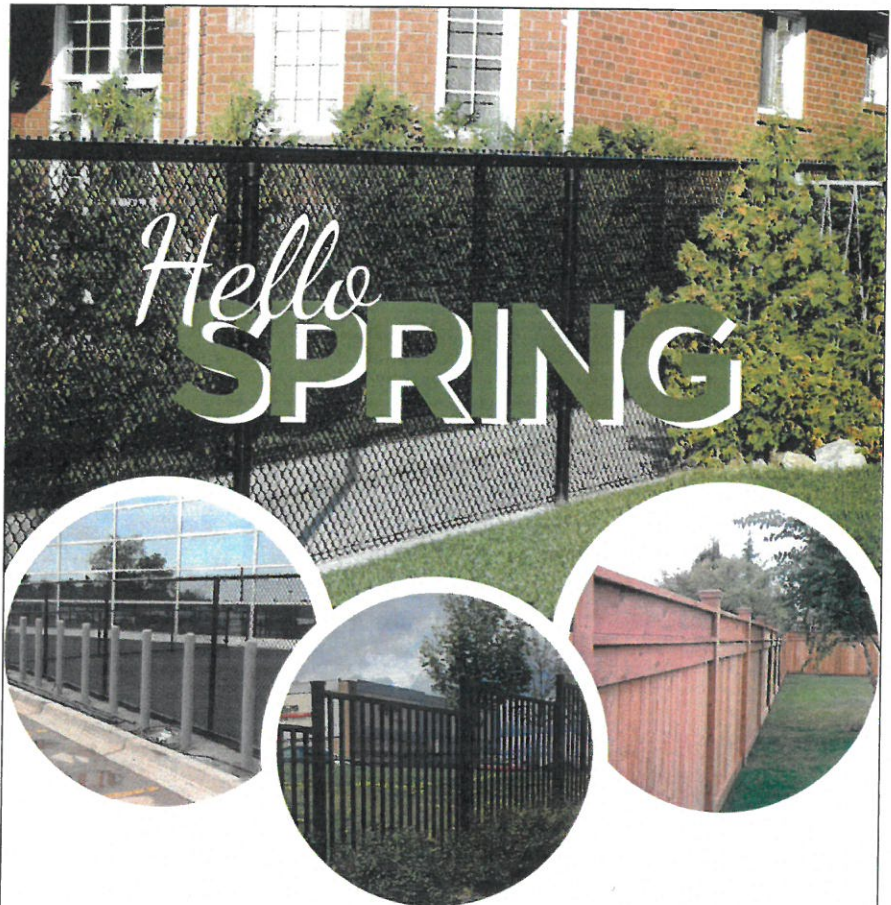
Accuracy of locates is also a significant problem and causes project delays. Locates are inaccurate either by dig area, or the locate sketch details or paper does not matching paint. These inaccuracies put an immediate stop to our projects, generally requiring the entire locate process to restart rather

than having an immediate fix from the LSP.

I personally deal with the claims from the utilities after damages occur. After a damage, the quality of locates generally works in our favour with respect to liability for damage with the utility owner/LSP, however it puts us in a precarious position with respect to regulators.

We would like to note that if our crew is already on site, the LSP's are generally good at getting back the same day to fix the locate.

Lastly, our administrator reports that there are some utility owners that are notorious for NOT repainting a work area after the initial request, and also have poor customer service levels.



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