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ONE CALL SM

The Official Newsletter of Iowa One Call

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Excavator

QUARTERLY



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WHAT'S UP BELOW



UNDERSTANDING THE DIG TICKET

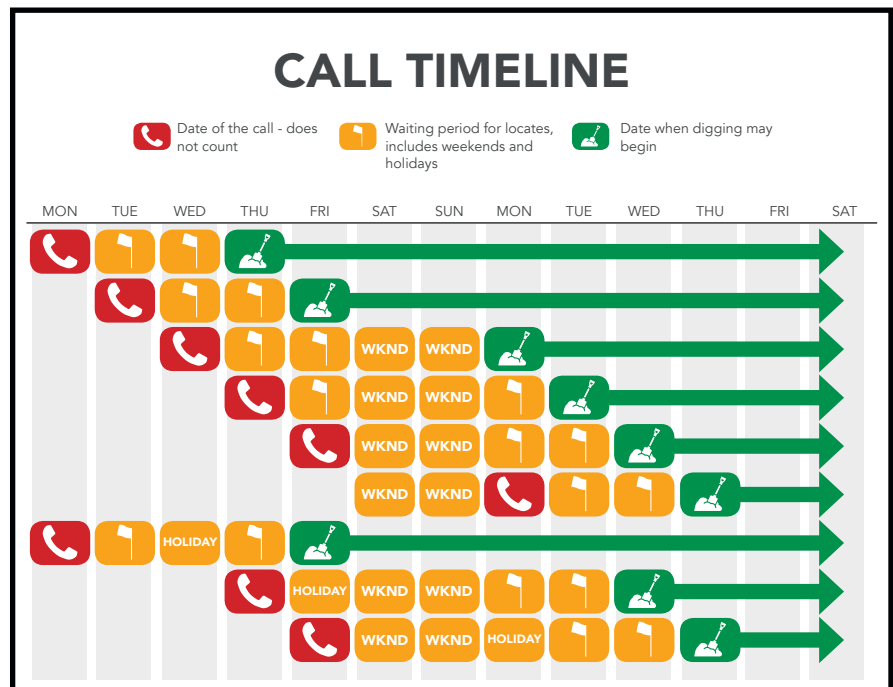
Every excavation in Iowa begins with a simple legal obligation: notify Iowa One Call before you dig. But in the field, misunderstandings about how that notice—commonly called the “dig ticket” or simply the “ticket”—works can create confusion, delay projects, and put underground facilities at risk. This article addresses some of the most common misconceptions about dig tickets under Iowa Code Chapter 480, the “Iowa One Call law.”

THE TICKET: WHAT IT IS AND HOW LONG IT LASTS

Under Iowa Code Chapter 480, excavators are required to provide notice to Iowa One Call at least 48 hours in advance of any planned excavation (excluding the day of notice, Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays). Once that notice is submitted, it becomes the official ticket—the starting point and foundation for the locating and marking process for that specific excavation project.

Once submitted, the ticket is valid for 25 calendar days, beginning from the day the 48-hour waiting period concludes. During that entire 25-day window, the ticket remains open and active. The ticket is valid as long as locate markings are maintained and intact, or when suitable reference points have been established based on the original markings.

Key Rule: The main ticket remains open for the full 25-calendar-day period. No locator or operator can close the main ticket. The ticket belongs to the excavation, not to any single underground facility operator.



ONE TICKET, MULTIPLE OPERATORS

A proposed excavation area will typically involve more than one type of underground facility: electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water, sewer, and others. Each underground facility operator in the area listed on the ticket is required by law to respond to the notice, which is a process called “positive response.”

Each operator receives their own copy of the original ticket. Critically, however, all copies share the



same nine-digit serial number (ticket number).

That number is consistent across every copy because every copy originates from the same single ticket.

This is where a very common misunderstanding arises.

THE MISCONCEPTION: “I CAN CLOSE THE TICKET”

A locator assigned to mark an operator’s underground facilities receives their copy of the ticket and—understandably—may think of it as “the” ticket. From their vantage point, it represents their entire responsibility. Some locators have told excavators that they are “closing the ticket” once their marking work is done.

This is a misconception. A locator’s copy is only one of potentially many copies tied to the same nine-digit ticket number. A locator cannot close the original (main) ticket because doing so would purport to close a ticket that includes obligations belonging to other operators entirely.

What locators and operators are responsible for is completing their assigned copy of the ticket, which means finishing the locating and marking of their operator’s underground facilities within the required 48-hour period or “clearing” the ticket when there is no conflict in the excavation area.

Bottom Line: When a locator says they are “closing the ticket,” what they mean—and what the law contemplates—is that they are completing their assigned portion of the ticket. The main ticket itself remains open for the full 25-day period.

THE 48-HOUR PERIOD: MARKING DEADLINES AND TICKET LIFE

The law requires that all locating and marking or clearing be completed within the 48-hour waiting period. That period begins at 6:00 a.m. on the next business day following submission of the ticket to Iowa One Call (Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays are excluded from this calculation).

Whether the locate markings are completed on time or not, that outcome does not affect the 25-calendar-day ticket life. The ticket remains open and valid for the full period, provided the markings are maintained and intact or suitable reference points have been established.

Important: It is always the operator’s or locator’s responsibility to attempt to complete all locating and marking within the 48-hour period. This may include contacting and coordinating directly with the excavator when questions or site-access issues arise. Statuses such as “Not Marked – No Access” are not statutory exceptions that relieve an operator or locator of this obligation—every reasonable effort must be made within the required timeframe.

WHEN AN EXCAVATOR FAILS TO RESPOND: LOCATOR PROTOCOL, STATUS CODES, AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Occasionally, a locator may be unable to complete the required locating and marking within the 48-hour period because the excavator provided inadequate information, failed to perform required pre-marking of the proposed excavation area (commonly known as “white lining”), or both and then fails to respond to the locator’s reasonable attempts to make contact. Iowa Code Chapter 480 addresses this situation with a specific protocol, and the legal consequences for both sides are significant.

THE CORRECT LOCATE STATUS SEQUENCE

1. First, the locator should status their ticket copy as “Not Marked – Inadequate Information.” This accurately reflects the situation and preserves the operator’s legal standing.
2. Next, the locator must contact the excavator within the required 48-hour period to coordinate whatever arrangements are needed to complete the locating and marking. If the excavator responds within the 48-hour period with sufficient information, the locator should mark the facilities and update the status to “marked” (or “clear” if there is no conflict), or, alternatively, seek the excavator’s agreement to an agreed-to marking schedule to complete the work within a agreed to time outside the 48-hour period.
3. Only if the excavator still fails to respond after those reasonable contact attempts should the locator update the status to “Lack of Response by the Excavator.”

WHAT STATUS “LACK OF RESPONSE BY THE EXCAVATOR” ACTUALLY MEANS—AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

A status of “Lack of Response by the Excavator” is not simply a procedural placeholder—it has real legal consequences under Chapter 480. Once an operator or locator has properly recorded this status, their legal obligations to locate and mark their facilities are considered complete for that ticket, unless and until one of the following occurs:

- The excavator and locator reach a mutual agreed-to marking schedule (Status Code 4); or
- The excavator submits a new notice of excavation (new ticket).

There is no language in Chapter 480 that places any continuing legal requirements on an operator or locator to locate their facilities outside of the 48-hour period where they were previously unable to do so because of lack of response by the excavator. The only recognized pathways to require marking after that period are an agreed-to marking schedule or a fresh locate request.

Critically, even after the status “Lack of Response by the Excavator” is applied, the main ticket remains open for its full 25-calendar-day life. However, because the affected operator’s facilities remain unmarked, the excavation cannot lawfully proceed in that area, and the excavator cannot force that operator to re-mark under the same ticket. This is a significant practical consequence that excavators must understand.



THE RIPPLE EFFECT: WHY “LACK OF RESPONSE BY THE EXCAVATOR” AFFECTS OTHER OPERATORS

When an excavator is required to file a new notice of excavation because one operator used this status, that new ticket is issued to all operators in the excavation area—not just the one who applied the status. This means operators who already properly marked their facilities under the original ticket must now re-locate and re-mark under the new ticket as well. This creates unnecessary burden for compliant operators and further delays the project.

This is precisely why it is so critical that excavators promptly answer and respond to all attempted contacts by locators and operators during the excavation process, and why Chapter 480 requires excavators to designate a contact person and telephone number on each ticket that must remain reachable throughout the duration of the excavation.

THE PRACTICAL SOLUTION: “AGREED-TO MARKING SCHEDULE” (IF FEASIBLE)

When an excavator eventually provides sufficient information after

the 48-hour period has expired, and an operator or locator has already applied the lack of response by the excavator status, the most efficient resolution—where operationally feasible—is for both parties to reach a mutual agreed-to marking schedule. However, a practical obstacle exists: because the operator or locator has likely already closed out their portion of the ticket, and they may have no ability to reopen it in order to update the status to an agreed-to marking schedule. Whether that ability exists will depend on the operator’s or locator’s system and the ticket’s current state.



If the status can be updated, this approach benefits everyone: it keeps the main ticket alive, avoids the delay and administrative burden of a new ticket, and prevents the unnecessary re-location burden on compliant operators. If it cannot, a new notice of excavation will be required.

In either case, an agreed-to marking schedule requires genuine mutual agreement. An unanswered message or voicemail left by the locator does not constitute an agreed-to marking schedule. Both sides must affirmatively agree to the schedule for it to be valid.

A NOTE ON POTENTIAL MISUSE OF THE “LACK OF RESPONSE BY EXCAVATOR” STATUS

Whether a locator’s assertion that they could not locate because of lack of excavator response is accurate—or is being used improperly—is a matter that can be reviewed if a complaint is filed with the Iowa Utilities Commission or the Iowa Attorney General’s Office. This is particularly relevant if other operators listed on the same ticket were able to locate and mark their facilities based on the same locate request. However, the complaint process takes time and does not resolve field issues quickly. The practical safeguards against misuse are prompt communication and mutual cooperation between excavators and locators from the start.

A NOTE ON TICKET TALK

Given the significant consequences that can follow a failed or disputed communication—including the loss of a locator’s obligation to complete the locating and marking, the need for a new notice of excavation, and the re-location burden placed on other operators—establishing clear, documented communication between excavators and locators is more than just good practice. Iowa One Call offers an optional online communication tool called Ticket Talk, which allows excavators, locators, and operators to initiate and respond to text-based messages that appear directly on the electronic ticket and are retained as part of the ticket record. Because the communication lives on the ticket itself, it creates a timestamped, easily accessible trail that can be critical if the adequacy of contact attempts is ever questioned, whether in the field, a dispute, or a civil action. While use of Ticket Talk is not required, excavators and locators alike would be well served to familiarize themselves with it and consider making it a routine part of their excavation communication process.





THE MARKETING UPDATE

NEW BILLBOARDS ARE ON THE WAY

If you've driven pretty much anywhere in Iowa over the last three years, chances are you've spotted one of our Risky Ronnie billboards. They've become a familiar fixture on highways and byways across the state, and at this point, we'd be a little surprised if you hadn't seen one. They've done their job well. But, even the best things need a refresh now and then.



EVEN THEY CALLED...

A new era of billboards is on the way. The goal with the new creative direction was simple: take something iconic, something everybody recognizes, and make it ridiculous. Something that turns heads and maybe even makes you smile.

Safe digging is a serious topic—nobody here forgets that—but getting the word out doesn't have to be. Years of consistent branding built strong awareness across the state. Now the goal is to make sure people don't just recognize us, but remember us.

Keep an eye out for them as they start popping up across the state. There's a good chance they'll catch you off guard, and that's exactly what we were going for.



EVEN THEY CALLED...

A NEW DIRECTION FOR RISKY RONNIE

There's news worth sharing on the Risky Ronnie front as well! Ronnie has become a recognizable face across Iowa, and that was always the first step. The original "Even Ronnie Knows" commercial campaign did exactly what it was designed to do: introduce the character, give him a personality, and get people paying attention. That foundation is in place now, and it's solid.

This next phase is about putting the message to work. Ronnie isn't going anywhere—same character, same spirit, same energy—but the new commercials are built to do more than get a laugh. This time around, viewers should walk away understanding what Iowa One Call actually is, how the ticketing process works, and what safe digging looks like in practice. The entertainment is still there, it's just carrying more weight now.



INTRODUCING THE Safe Excavator App



State laws pertaining to excavation (or digging) vary – and finding the specific information you're looking for quickly can be a challenge.

The **Safe Excavator App** makes it easy to find state-specific excavation information including the following requirements or events:

- ▼ Advance notice or wait time
- ▼ Pre-marking ('whitelining')
- ▼ 811 ticket information
- ▼ Names of local enforcement agencies and 811 call centers, also connecting you electronically to submit a locate request
- ▼ Includes safe digging tips + checklist

PLEASE CONTACT
Lindsay Sander
713.208.0273
LNS@SanderResources.com
WITH ANY QUESTIONS.


**National
Excavator
Initiative**
Safety always.

FREE to download in the App store (Apple) and Google Play (Android)

Search "safe excavator" or "safeexcavator" and look for the orange shovel



As simple as...
1...2...3!

- 1 Select a state
- 2 Pick an activity
- 3 Research your topic



www.safeexcavator.com



Know what's below.
811 before you dig.

The National Excavator Initiative is an effort to raise the awareness of a critically important program: 811.

Contacting 811 before digging is the single most critical action an excavator can take to help ensure their health and safety are protected, while at the same time preventing financial harm and environmental impact.



REMINDER: WE HAVE A PROMO STORE!

Iowa One Call has a [promotional items store](#). If that's news to you, you're not alone—it tends to fly under the radar. Consider this your friendly reminder that the store exists, everything in it is free, and we just gave the whole lineup a fresh look.

All of our promo materials have been updated with a cleaner, more readable look. Whether you need things for your staff/crew or you're prepping for an upcoming event, these items are an easy way to keep Iowa One Call top of mind.

Ordering is simple. Head to the [Iowa One Call website](#), navigate to the [Promotional Items link](#), create an account, place your order, and that's it. No cost, no catch. Some items do have ordering limits, and availability depends on what's in stock at the time.

These items are great for handing out to your team, setting out at job sites, or distributing at community events where you want to get the dig safe message in front of people. If you've got something coming up, now's a good time to place an order and have materials ready to go.

We're also adding new items down the road, so check back on the store from time to time. There's plenty more in the works!

OTHER REMINDERS:

The 2026 ESAP Webinar on Ticket Talk will be December 1; registration will open September 1.

Nominations are open for Excavator and Locator of the year! [Click here to submit a nomination](#).

The 2027 Iowa Excavation Safety Summit will be January 28 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds Varied Industries Building.



HERE'S WHAT'S CURRENTLY IN THE STORE:

- Pens and pencils
- Wallet cards
- Color-coded magnets
- Scratch pads
- Sticky notes (new)
- Sticky calendars (they're back!)
- Hit kits
- Ag brochures
- Homeowner brochures
- Drink coozies (coming soon)
- And more on the way!

NEW BOARD MEMBER



Zach Ries is an experienced leader in the underground utilities industry who began his career as a damage prevention specialist with Vanguard Utility Partners in 2018. After two years honing his field expertise as a locator, he advanced to field supervisor and now serves as the Iowa state manager.

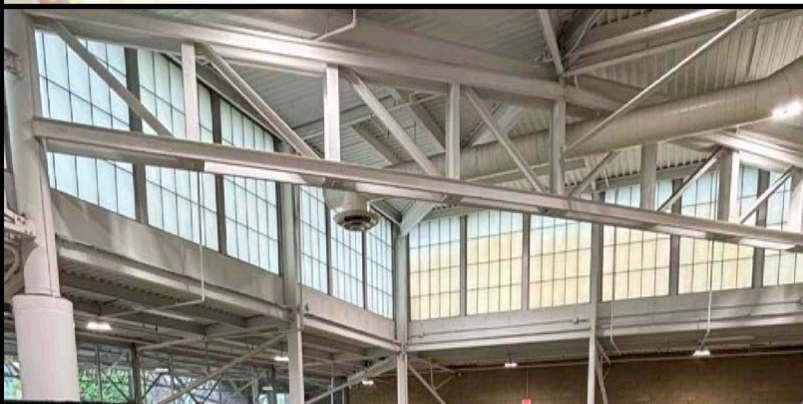
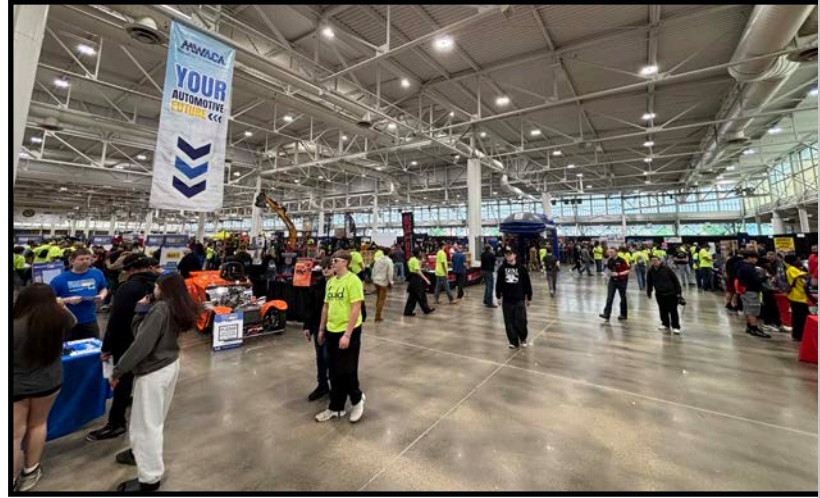
In his current role, Zach has been instrumental in guiding Vanguard through its largest expansion in Iowa, during which the team has tripled in size since 2020. His leadership supports the company's commitment to safety, quality, and service, helping create safer excavation practices across the state.

Zach joined Vanguard after graduating from Upper Iowa University, where he played football as a student-athlete. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his family; cheering on the Hawkeyes, Cubs, and Packers; and exploring new places through travel.

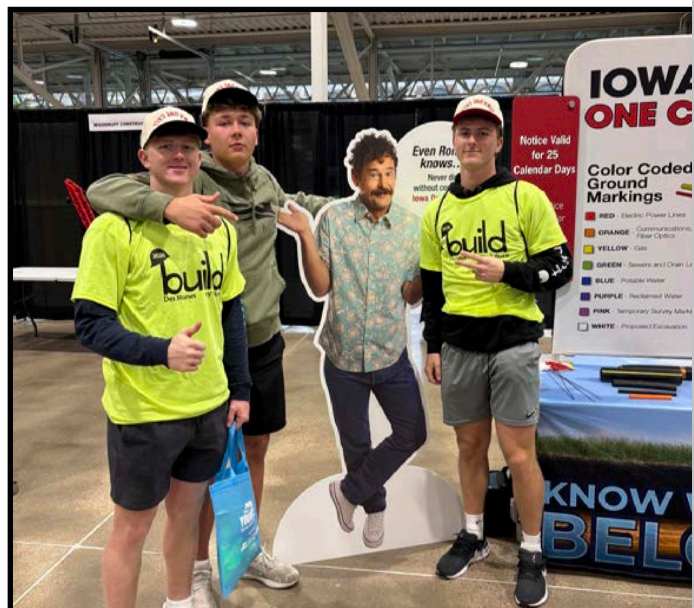


IOWA ONE CALL AT THE 2026 BUILD MY FUTURE EVENT

On April 15, Iowa One Call was part of this year's Build My Future DSM event at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines. If you're not familiar with it, Build My Future is a hands-on career fair experience designed to showcase career opportunities in Iowa to high school students. This year's event welcomed over 7,000 students from more than 100 schools across the state, with 100+ exhibitors representing more than 20 career pathways. It's a big event!



Iowa One Call partnered with ONEOK, the American Petroleum Institute, and the Iowa Utilities Commission to host a shared booth space. ONEOK and the American Petroleum Institute put together an impressively displayed pipeline strike that served as a powerful talking piece—a real, tangible way to show students what can happen when someone digs without a locate. They also had a mock locate set up that drew a lot of attention, and it was clear the students genuinely got a kick out of it.



On our end, Iowa One Call and the IUC had cutouts of real utility pipes and wires on display and handed out merch. It gave us a chance to have meaningful conversations with students about the one call process, why it matters, and what careers in this industry actually look like.

This was one of the most rewarding events we've been a part of in recent memory. The students brought great energy, and we had genuine talks with them about their futures.



We can't thank ONEOK enough for getting us on board and Build My Future DSM for putting on a wonderful event. This will definitely be an annual event for us moving forward!

NEW BOARD MEMBER



Mitchell Griffith is a seasoned telecommunications professional with over 25 years of industry experience. He began his career as a route technician, specializing in locating fiber optic cable and performing maintenance and installations on fiber networks. His dedication and expertise led him to leadership roles, first as manager of the fiber network and currently as manager of fiber operations.

In his current position, Mitchell oversees a diverse team of 31 professionals, including field technicians, transport technicians, outside plant engineers, solutions engineers, and other key members of the operations team. He is committed to operational excellence and continuously seeks innovative strategies to enhance team performance and service delivery.

Mitchell is passionate about expanding his knowledge across all areas of telecom and technology. He embraces continuous learning and is driven to explore new solutions that keep his department at peak efficiency.

Outside of work, Mitchell enjoys quality time with his family and takes great pride in supporting his children at their various sporting events.

IN THE NEWS



Local Excavation and Safety News From Around the Web



National Safe Digging Month stresses importance of utility locate tickets before digging

iuc.iowa.gov

An estimated 60 million American households plan to undertake an outdoor digging project in the next year, according to Common Ground Alliance, but roughly one in six homeowners are likely to not have their underground utilities located before that work begins... [\[Learn More\]](#)

Annual program promotes water efficiency and conservation

iuc.iowa.gov

With spring home repair projects coming up soon, now is a good time to look for drips and leaks that waste water in your home and lead to higher utility bills. Leaks in residential plumbing lead to nearly a trillion gallons of water wasted each year in the United States, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates approximately 10 percent of American homes have a leak that wastes 90 or more gallons of water a day... [\[Learn More\]](#)

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