



EMPLOYMENT AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF  
LABOR AND INDUSTRY

# Safety-qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Program Webinar



February 11, 2025

# Agenda + overview

- **Introduction and broadband updates** from the Office of Broadband Development
- **Presentation from Sean O'Neil and Don Sivigny at the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)**
- End with time for questions from attendees

*Please note, we will wait until the end of the webinar to answer questions posted in the chat*

Today's presentation will be recorded and [posted online](#) along with the slides

# Broadband updates

- **Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment updates**

- BEAD is currently in the [Pre-Qualification Process](#), which opened on January 27 and will run until February 27
- The BEAD Approved Contractor list is currently under development. Information when available will be added to the [OBD BEAD webpage](#) and shared in OBD's biweekly email blast
- Subscribe here to receive the [OBD biweekly email blast](#)
- [Register online](#) to attend weekly BEAD office hours with OBD, Tuesdays at 11am through April 1

- **Approved Contractor List Update**

- **State of Border-to-Border Programs**

- **Digital Opportunity Update**



# UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

# Agenda

- DLI's Construction Codes and Licensing Division
- Overview of legislation – DLI's role
- Definitions
- Requirements for installation
- Certification standards
- Department resources

# Who We Are

The Construction Codes and Licensing Division provides for the regulation and enforcement of construction-related health and safety codes and licensing laws in new and existing structures.

Building Plan Review

Plumbing Plan Review

Inspections

Permitting/Business

Licensing

Enforcement

Code Services

Manufactured Structures

- MN Statute 326B.198
  - Underground Telecommunications Infrastructure



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- For the purposes of this section:
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- (3) "**underground telecommunications utilities**" means buried broadband, telephone and other telecommunications transmission, distribution and service lines, and associated facilities; and



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- (3) "**underground telecommunications utilities**" means buried broadband, telephone and other telecommunications transmission, distribution and service lines, and associated facilities; and
- (4) "**underground utilities**" means buried electric transmission and distribution lines, gas and hazardous liquids pipelines and distribution lines, sewer and water pipelines, telephone or telecommunications lines, and associated facilities.

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  - (1) the location of existing utilities by hand- or hydro-excavation or other accepted methods must be performed by a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer;
  - **(2) where telecommunications infrastructure is installed by means of directional drilling, the monitoring of the location and depth of the drill head must be performed by a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer; and**

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  - (1) the location of existing utilities by hand- or hydro-excavation or other accepted methods must be performed by a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer;
  - (2) where telecommunications infrastructure is installed by means of directional drilling, the monitoring of the location and depth of the drill head must be performed by a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer; and
  - (3) **no fewer than two safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers must be present at all times at any location** where telecommunications infrastructure is being installed by means of directional drilling.

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- **(b) Beginning July 1, 2025, all installations of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to this subdivision within the seven-county metropolitan area must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers.**

- **Installation requirements**
- (b) Beginning July 1, 2025, all installations of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to this subdivision within the seven-county metropolitan area must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers.
- (c) **Beginning January 1, 2026, all installations of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to this subdivision within this state must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers.**

# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(a) **The commissioner of Labor and Industry, in consultation with the Office of Broadband, shall approve standards for a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer certification program that requires a person to:**



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(1) complete a **40-hour initial course that includes classroom and hands-on instruction** covering proper work procedures for safe installation of underground utilities, including:



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(i) regulations applicable to **excavation** near existing utilities;



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(ii) identification, location, and verification of existing utility lines



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(ii) identification, location, and **verification of utility lines** using **hand- or hydro-excavation** or other accepted methods;



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(iii) response to **line strike incidents;**



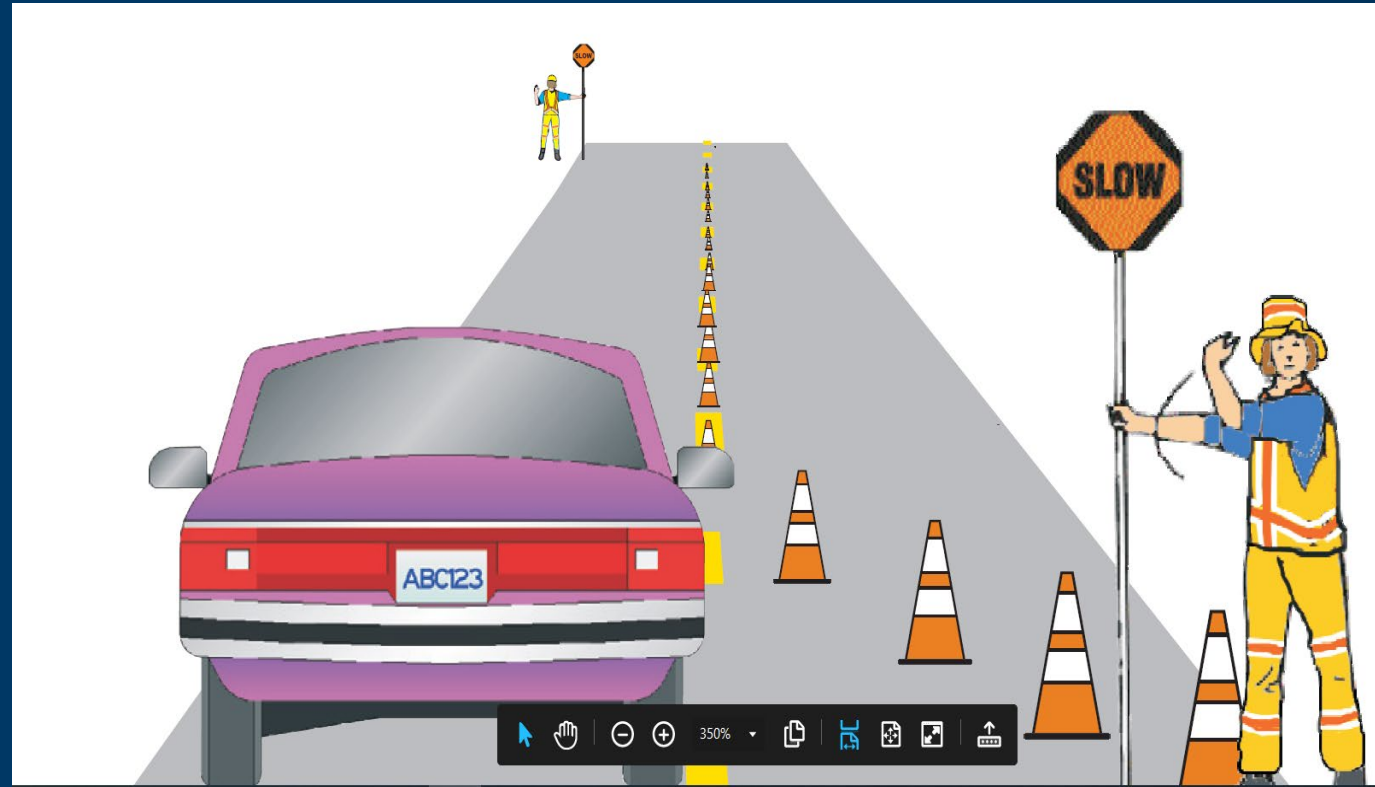
# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(iv) **traffic control** procedures;



2/11/2025



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# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(v) **use of a tracking device** to safely guide directional drill equipment along a drill path; and

(vi) **avoidance and mitigation of safety hazards** posed by underground utility installation projects.



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(2) demonstrate knowledge of the course material by **successfully completing an examination** approved by the commissioner; and



## Certification Standards

(3) **complete a four-hour refresher course** within three years of completing the original course and **every three years thereafter** in order to maintain certification.



# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(b) The commissioner must develop an approval process for training providers under this subdivision **and may suspend or revoke the approval of any training provider that fails to demonstrate consistent delivery of approved curriculum** or success in preparing participants to complete the examination.

# 326B.198 - UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

## Certification Standards

(b) The commissioner must develop an approval process for training providers under this subdivision and may suspend or revoke the approval of any training provider that fails to demonstrate consistent delivery of approved curriculum or success in preparing participants to complete the examination.

**DLI will review course materials** for the initial course, exam, and the 4-hour refresher course.

# Department Resources



[www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov)



# Enter “Broadband” into the search engine



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State law requires the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), in consultation with the Office of Broadband Development, to approve standards for a Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Certification Program (Minnesota Statutes 326B.198).

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## SAFETY-QUALIFIED UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INSTALLER PROGRAM

State law requires the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), in consultation with the [Office of Broadband Development](#), to approve standards for a Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Certification Program ([Minnesota Statutes 326B.198](#)).

This certification requirement applies to the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure that is located within 10 feet of existing underground utilities or that crosses existing underground utilities. This work must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers pursuant to the effective dates outlined in statute.

### Timelines

- Beginning July 1, 2025, the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to Minn. Stat. 326B.198, within the seven-county metropolitan area, must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers.
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to Minn. Stat. 326B.198, throughout Minnesota, must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications

## Training requirements

This program requires individuals seeking to become certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer to complete 40 hours of training (and pass an exam), which requires both classroom and hands-on instruction.

The legislation also requires that certified installers obtain four hours of refresher training to be completed within three years of completing the initial 40-hour course, and every three years thereafter, to maintain certification.

The training will be provided by training providers who will submit their course materials to DLI for review and approval.

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# Additional Information/Links

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- [Frequently asked questions and answers](#)

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- Frequently asked questions and answers
- Checklist for safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers

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- [Draft course outline](#)

## Frequently asked questions and answers

### **Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Program**

#### **Are there training requirements for individuals seeking to install underground telecommunications in Minnesota?**

Yes. Minnesota Statutes 326B.198 was passed into law in 2024 and requires that the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), in consultation with the Office of Broadband Development, approve standards for the Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Certification Program. This certification requirement applies to the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure that is located within 10 feet of existing underground utilities or that crosses the existing underground utilities. This work must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers pursuant to the effective dates outlined in statute.

This program requires individuals seeking to become certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer to complete 40 hours of training (and pass an exam), which requires both classroom and hands-on instruction.

The legislation also requires that certified installers obtain four hours of refresher training to be completed within three years of completing the initial 40-hour course, and every three years thereafter, to maintain certification.

#### **Who will provide the training and education that is needed for one to be certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer?**

Interested training providers will develop their own training programs, exams and refresher courses. Once developed, training providers must submit their training content to DLI for review and approval.

## **Who will provide the training and education that is needed for one to be certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer?**

Interested training providers will develop their own training programs, exams and refresher courses. Once developed, training providers must submit their training content to DLI for review and approval.

## **Who will approve the initial training courses, exams and refresher courses?**

DLI, in consultation with the Office of Broadband Development.

## **What type of classroom training is acceptable for training providers?**

Classroom training can be live in-person, live online, self-paced online, or a combination of all three types of training. Best practices suggest that interested training providers do not lean heavily on self-paced online instruction as this mode of instruction does not engage learners as effectively as other methods of classroom instruction.

## **Are there mandatory allocations of time for training providers as it relates to classroom instruction and hands-on training?**

No. Training providers are encouraged to provide effective and interactive trainings. Trainings must include an initial 40-hour certification course, which includes both classroom and hands-on instruction. The hours allotted to each method of instruction will be determined by training providers. Best practices suggest that at least 24 hours of training be dedicated to hands-on training, with the remaining 16 hours dedicated to classroom instruction.

## Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Certification Program checklist

Entities seeking approval of standards for a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer certification program and approval of training providers should submit the following to DLI, Attn: Don Sivigny, [don.sivigny@state.mn.us](mailto:don.sivigny@state.mn.us).

- Training provider name:
- Provider address/point contact(s):
- Course number (If already approved within the 3-year cycle)
- Training staff details
  - Instructor qualifications (Industry experience, education, qualifications)
- Location and dates of training
  - Planned location/setting of classroom training:
  - Planned location/setting of the hands-on training:
- Course outline submitted, with content subcategories, learning objectives and delivery methods identifying the following:
  - Regulations applicable to excavation near existing utilities using equipment, hand or hydro-excavation or other accepted methods.
- Identification, location and verification of utility lines.
  - Response to line strike incidents.
  - Traffic control procedures.
  - Working in a confined space such as manholes.
  - Use of a tracking device to safely guide directional drill equipment along a drill path.
  - Avoidance and mitigation of safety hazards posed by underground utility installation projects in accordance with OSHA and other industry standards.
  - Other topics to be taught in the course.

## Purpose and outcome

### Purpose

The purpose of this training is to fulfill the requirements set forth in Minnesota Statutes [326B.198](#), Underground Telecommunications Infrastructure, to ensure that installers of underground telecommunication systems (installer) are trained and qualified to perform such work. Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) recognized training providers (providers) are to ensure that installers understand the installation practices and safety procedures needed to complete underground telecommunication installation work in a proper and safe manner. This certification program will also incorporate a continuing education (CE) component for re-certification every three years, following the initial 40 hours of classroom and hands-on training.

### Outcomes

At the end of this training course, which includes classroom training, field training and testing for certification, the installer should understand/know the following:

1. The need and use of utility locations.
2. The regulations applicable to excavation near existing underground utilities, including but not limited to:
  - a. Equipment excavation;
  - b. Hand digging; and
  - c. Hydro excavation.
3. The use and techniques for flagging and traffic control of the work area.
4. Occupational health and safety standards and how to properly protect workers.
5. How to avoid and/or mitigate any hazards associated with underground utility installations.
6. The requirements for working in a confined space such as in manholes, etc.
7. An understanding of horizontal directional drill operations, including the use of tracking devices to safely guide the drill.
8. The proper response for responding to a line strike or other incident.
9. Other information as needed for specifics of the installation.
10. Be able to demonstrate knowledge of course material by successfully passing the exam.

## **Initial course outline (example)**

### **Safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer (40 hours)**

**Number of hours: 40 | Class size: TBD | Prerequisites: None**

#### **Course description**

This course provides trainees the education to become a certified safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer (installer). This course is intended to provide information, training and education that will provide installers with the tools needed to pass a certification exam after completing the required 40 hours of Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)- recognized training.

This training will include and address a variety of topics and safety measures required to successfully and safely complete work as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer.

#### **Expected outcomes for trainees**

The installer must successfully complete a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on training to then pass an exam to demonstrate they have the knowledge, skills and training required for certification. An exam score of 70% or higher is a suggested best practices benchmark for DLI-recognized training providers.

The installer must have a full understanding and knowledge of how to safely install underground telecommunication systems after successfully completing a DLI-recognized course.

#### **Course content**

This course will consist of both classroom training and in-the-field hands-on training. Best practices suggest that a training course may include 16 hours of classroom training and 24 hours of hands-on training. This training will include topics addressing proper work procedures for the safe installation of underground utilities including but not limited to the following:

# Questions

Contact Don Sivigny at 651-284-5874 or via email at

[don.sivigny@state.mn.us](mailto:don.sivigny@state.mn.us)