

## **EasyLocates is working with Ontario One Call to make locates more efficient and cost effective**

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We offer a software tool to contractors to help them manage their locate statuses and paperwork. After for few months of examining our members accounts, we noticed a disconnect. While it is probably an honest mistake, Ontario One Call categorizes locates as expired when they are still valid.

This is a problem because it means that members are notified to remark utilities when the locates are still valid, and this costs money. It is also a problem because it creates confusion, and a paperwork headache for contractors.

The good news is that we contacted Ontario One Call and they have jumped at the opportunity to solve the problem. The solution ends up deceptively simple and should quickly solve things. This will save the expense of remarking valid locates, and the confusion of managing relocates.

### **Background**

When doing a locate there are two important dates. The first date is:

1. The date that the locate was requested. [RDATE]

This date is important for members are expected to complete locates with a set period from the date a locate is initially requested [RDATE].

The next important date is:

2. The date that a locator marks a utility. [MDATE]

This date is important because locates are valid for a specified duration beginning from the [MDATE]. The [RDATE] is not relevant in terms of the validity of locates. Locates are valid from the date that they are marked, not the date that the locates were originally requested through Ontario One Call.

Here is a simple example to illustrate the point.

Located requested [RDATE] – Nov. 1  
Located marked [MDATE] – Nov. 5 (valid 30 days)  
Locate expires [XDATE] – Dec. 5

### **Relocate problem**

While keeping a close eye on the accounts of new members, we noticed a strange pattern emerging when they requested relocates. Although their locates were valid, the Ontario One Call system had them categorized as expired. This was a startling discover because it caused massive confusion for us and our customers.

The problem is so simple that it goes unnoticed, and it took a few months to pinpoint the issue. Here is what we uncovered.

Right now, when a contractor submits for a relocate, instead of checking the [MDATE] to determine if the locates are still valid, the Ontario One Call system checks the [RDATE]. The problem is that the [RDATE] has no bearing on the validity of a locate. Locates expire a set number of days after they are marked [MDATE], not a set number of days after the original locate is requested [RDATE].

In the real world the problem causes two issues.

1. Expensive for members – Locators are doing relocates when their locates are still valid, and members are paying for this duplication of work.
2. Inefficient – Contractors are confused as to why some of their utilities need to be remarked when they are still valid, and are required to unnecessarily track all sorts of extra dates and paper work.

What is most problematic about this issue is that it is universal. Every relocate is affected by it. following example will illustrate the problem.

### **Scenario**

**Step 1:** A Contractor requests locates on Nov. 1 [RDATE] - Assume there are 3 utilities on this site - Ontario One Call generates a ticket number, notifies 3 members.

**Step 2:** All three member' utilities are marked (slightly late, not uncommon) Nov. 15 [MDATE]. They are valid for 30 days. They expire on Dec. 15 [XDATE].

**Step 3:** On Dec. 2 the contractor submits for a relocate. Ontario One Call looks at the [RDATE] and thinks that all 3 locates are expired, but they are not. Ontario One Call notifies all 3 members to do a relocate, even though the locates are valid until Dec. 15. This confuses the contractor, and costs money, because utilities are being remarked when they do not need to be.

### **The solution**

Thankfully, the solution is simple. When a contractor submits for a relocate, the Ontario One Call system could look at the [MDATE] to check if locates are still valid, rather than the [RDATE]. That is, Ontario One Call uses the date that the utility was marked, to determine whether the locate is valid. This only makes sense, because as was mentioned earlier, the [RDATE] has no bearing on the validity of a locate.

### **Conclusion**

It is difficult to stress just how deceptive this problem really is. First, we believe it is an honest oversight, and it took us months of analyzing relocates to finally identify the issue. Second, its effects are far reaching, impacting members and locators often, and contractors on *every* relocate. Third, the solution is straightforward, and will immediately garner positive results by, 1) Saving money on relocates, and 2) helping ease the burden for contractors who have to manage the hundreds and thousands of statuses, documents, and dates for all of their locates.

We understand from our customers that the locate process, and the relationship with Ontario One Call, has become better and better over the years. We can confirm this, because we have engaged Ontario One Call on this issue and they have responded swiftly. We hope look forwarding to having the relocate issue resolved, so that the locate process will be even more efficient for generations to come.