

The Importance of Surveying for Buried Services

During a recent project excavation, a site team uncovered what appeared to be a standard blue water pipe in a position that the C.A.T. and Genny underground survey had indicated an electric cable should be found.

The site team suspended work, informed a supervisor, the issue was documented for further investigation.

Closer inspection revealed that it was in fact the 600/1000-volt Electric Cable, but the cable was Blue instead of the standard black cable.



Excavated Cable



UK Power Networks were contacted for information regarding the use of "Blue Electric Cables".

They insisted that under no circumstances do they lay blue cables, only black for low voltage and red for high voltage.

However, a representative of UKPN did state that private developments and independent contractors have been known to deviate from the recommended industry standard colour coding, and that this was believed to be the case here.

It is also worth noting that on a private site, blue cables could also indicate that they are part of an intrinsically safe installation.

Key Points

- Importance of utilising a CAT type scan for buried services prior to work commencing – on this occasion it allowed the issue to be quickly identified and prevented any damage to utilities
- Misidentified utilities pose a threat of harm to the workforce as well as the public.
- Damage to utilities can cause loss of supply to residential and commercial properties.
- Installations do not always follow the recommended conventions, scanning beforehand prepares the site team for any anomalies.