



July 31, 2020

Larry L. Janes  
Executive Director  
South Dakota One Call Notification Board  
South Dakota 811  
P.O. Box 187  
Rapid City, SD 57709

Tel #/Cell # (605) 339-0529  
[exedir@sdonecall.com](mailto:exedir@sdonecall.com)

RE: Oftedal Construction, Inc, Response to Century Link Complaint: OC20-043

Dear Mr. Janes:

Oftedal Construction, Inc. (Oftedal) received the NOTICE OF COMPLAINT filed with the South Dakota One Call Notification Board by Mark Wirtz, a Century Link employee, on July 14, 2020 alleging Oftedal struck Century Link fiber optic lines six separate times on the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) Sheridan Lake Road project.

Oftedal takes working around utilities and utility strikes seriously. Oftedal initiates all necessary and required measures to avoid utility strikes before and during construction activities.

It is Oftedal's policy, prior to the opening of an excavation, to notify the proper utilities by calling the in state One Call provider or the National One Call line, if applicable. Utilities are asked to identify all underground pipe or cables in the areas where company excavating operations shall occur. Caution is exercised to ensure that utilities are not damaged, and employees are not exposed to utility hazards (electrocution, fire, etc.). While excavations are open, underground utility installations shall be protected, supported, or removed to safeguard employees.

On the Sheridan Lake Road project, Oftedal crews have consistently followed internal policies with respect to utilities and submitted timely locate requests with South Dakota One Call and talked with and worked closely with all on site locators.

In addition, Oftedal crews use non-destructive hydro-vacuum excavation methods when working near or when potholing utilities and utilize a multi frequency pipe and cable locating device to double-check areas after they have been marked by locators. Oftedal also documents discovered utility lines with a GPS to accurately mark utility location mitigating the risk of a future strike.

Corporate Headquarters ♦ 434 MT 59 N, PO Box 400, Miles City, MT 59301 ♦ (406) 232-5911 ♦ Fax (406) 232-7419

Branch Office ♦ 2376 Seven Mile Road, Casper, WY 82604 ♦ (307) 237-4499 ♦ Fax (307) 473-2633

[www.oftedalconstruction.com](http://www.oftedalconstruction.com)

An Equal Opportunity Employer



Lastly, as another measure to avoid future utility strikes, Oftedal crews notify the appropriate utility companies anytime an unmarked line is discovered to verify whether the line is active.

Despite these preventive measures and best practices when working around utilities, damaged utilities have occurred on the Sheridan Lake Project. Consistently on this project, new utility lines have not been buried as deep as the utility company indicated their lines where or should have been or underground utilities have been poorly marked or unmarked altogether.

For example, Oftedal has potholed and located many conflicts with the new utility line and old utility line ahead of construction operations. The new utility line is being relocated for the purpose of getting out of the path of our construction activities and to align utilities with the new road layout. To date, in the first 2,400 lineal feet of an 8,900 lineal feet of total road reconstruction, Oftedal has located three (3) areas where the new line conflicted with our storm sewer. Oftedal has spent many hours potholing the old utility line. Unfortunately, we have not caught all the conflicts in the newly relocated line.

In addition, there have been instances of conflicting and inaccurate information given to Oftedal on what areas along the active road reconstruction were complete with the relocation process and what lines were active or dead at the start of the project. Consequently, Oftedal and SDDOT requested utility companies provide a schedule, updates, and email confirmation when utilities were cut over into the new trench.

With respect to the specific claim by Century Link that Oftedal has cut a 600 and 400 pair cable six (6) times, Oftedal respectfully requests documentation, such as repair tickets, stating the date, time, and location of these six (6) strikes. This information is necessary to address each situation specifically.

The complaint also alleges Oftedal employees buried a 400 pair cable after it was hit to conceal the damage. This claim is false and unsupported. As standard policy and procedure on any company project, Oftedal supervisors notify utilities of any strike and stop work immediately.

The many conflicts with construction activities and utilities have resulted in costly delays. It is frustrating for many who are on the project to be told that lines are relocated and no longer in the way of our activities. Then, find these lines are still in conflict with our work.



**OFTEDAL**  
CONSTRUCTION, INC.  
EMPLOYEE OWNED • EMPLOYEE BUILT

---

Sincerely,

Luke Wallace- Safety Director

Oftedal Construction, Inc.

Office Phone: (307) 232-2328

Cell Phone: (307) 277-7155

Corporate Headquarters ♦ 434 MT 59 N. PO Box 400, Miles City, MT 59301 ♦ (406) 232-5911 ♦ Fax (406) 232-7419

Branch Office ♦ 2376 Seven Mile Road, Casper, WY 82604 ♦ (307) 237-4499 ♦ Fax (307) 473-2633

[www.oftedalconstruction.com](http://www.oftedalconstruction.com)

An Equal Opportunity Employer