General conditions and precautions to be taken when carrying out work adjacent to United Utilities water distribution apparatus

These general conditions and precautions apply to the water distribution system of United Utilities.

1. On request United Utilities will give approximate locations of mains according to our records. These records do not normally show the positions of service pipes from the mains to properties nor are they necessarily accurate or complete. No person or company shall be relieved from liability for damage caused by reason of the actual positions and/or depths being different from those shown on the plan. Any special requirements relative to our plant will be indicated. United Utilities employees will visit any site at reasonable notice to assist in the location of water plant and advise any precautions that may be required to obviate any damage.

2. In order to achieve safe working conditions adjacent to any apparatus the following should be observed:
   (a) All water apparatus should be located by hand digging prior to the use of mechanical excavation.
   (b) During construction work where heavy plant may have to cross the line of a water main, and the main is not under a carriageway of adequate standard of construction crossing points should be suitably reinforced with sleepers, steel plates or a specially constructed R.C. raft as necessary. These crossing points should be clearly indicated and crossing the line of the water main at other places should be prevented. United Utilities employees will advise on the type of reinforcement necessary. This is particularly important on agricultural or open land, where tiling or erosion may have reduced significantly the original cover.
   (c) No explosive to be used within 32 meters of any United Utilities water pipe without prior consultation with United Utilities.
   (d) Where it is proposed to carry out piling within 15 metres of any pipe United Utilities should be consulted so that affected pipes may be surveyed.

3. (a) Where excavation of trenches adjacent to any pipe affects its support, the pipe must be supported to the satisfaction of United Utilities.
   (b) Where a trench is excavated crossing or parallel to the line of the pipe, the backfill should be adequately compacted to prevent any settlement which could subsequently cause damage to the main. In special cases it may be necessary to provide permanent support to a pipe which has been exposed over the length of the excavation before backfilling and reinstatement is carried out. There should be no concrete backfilling contact with the pipe.

4. No apparatus should be laid over and along the line of a water pipe irrespective of clearance. A minimum clearance of 450 millimetres should be allowed between any plant being installed and an existing pipe, to facilitate repair, whether the adjacent plant be parallel to or crossing the water pipe. No manhole or chambers shall be built over or round a pipe.

5. Where a United Utilities pipe is coated with special wrapping and is damaged, even to a minor extent, United Utilities must be notified, leaving the trench open for ready access so that repairs can be made. In case of any material damage to the pipe itself causing leakage, or weakening of the mechanical strength of the pipe, the necessary remedial work will be charged.

6. If leakage is caused by a contractor or sub-contractor, inform the relevant United Utilities office.

7. Where proposals involve changing existing levels over our mains you will need to inform us. We will need specific locations to be identified together with precise details as to the magnitude of the proposed changes to existing ground levels. Changes to existing levels may require the diversion of our apparatus for which you will be charged. However, in certain circumstances we may wish to leave our apparatus where it is. On these occasions you will usually be required to protect our apparatus by means of a concrete raft and ensure that any surface boxes affected are either raised or lowered by yourselves. Under no circumstances should our surface boxes be either buried or left in a situation where they are raised above finished ground levels.

   If any damage to our apparatus occurs as a result of your works, repairs will be fully rechargeable to yourselves.

8. Where proposals involve resurfacing United Utilities must be notified if your excavation will be greater than 750mm in the highway and 300mm in a footpath, verge or other location.
Tree planting restrictions over water mains

Set out below are recommendations for tree planting in close proximity to water mains.

1. Both poplar and willow trees have extensive root systems and should not be planted within 10 metres of the water main.

2. The following trees and those of similar size, be they deciduous or evergreen, should not be planted within six metres of the pipeline eg ash, beech, birch, most conifers, elm, horse chestnut, lime, oak, sycamore, etc. Apple and pear trees also come into this category.

3. Bearing in mind that employees must have a clear path to conduct surveys, we recommend that no shrubs or bushes should be planted within one metre of the centre line of the pipeline.

4. There are bound to be cases where both the company and landowners wish to plant shrubs/bushes in close proximity to the water main for screening purposes. We would suggest that the following which are shallow rooting are suitable for this purpose: blackthorn, broom, cotoneaster, elder, hazel, laurel privet, quickthorn, snowberry and most ornamental flowering shrubs.

5. In areas where soft fruit is grown, we see no reason why blackcurrant, raspberries, gooseberries, should not be planted on the easement, providing that a path is left clear for the surveys.

About us
United Utilities is the North West's water company. We keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for seven million customers every day. From Crewe to Carlisle, we work hard behind the scenes to help your life flow smoothly.