OTTAWA FENCES

# Locates & Post Holes

Locate requests before digging post holes, Ontario Dig Authority, trees, and asking about post depth

4 Expert Answers from Fencing IQ

ottawafences.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

## Will the locator mark my hot tub line in Manotick?

The line from your house to a hot tub is a privately owned line, and we found no statement from Ontario Dig Authority either way on whether private lines will be marked. Ask about any private lines on your property when you submit your locate request.

Here is what the locate law does say. The Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 defines anyone who breaks ground as an excavator, including someone digging with a hand shovel. No one may dig before a locate request is made and answered. Ontario Dig Authority does not mark lines itself; each utility sends its own locator. The Act requires a locate request, and Ontario Dig Authority asks for it at least 5 business days before you dig. Requests are free and can be submitted no more than 30 days before the dig date.

A fence around a hot tub can fall under the Pool Enclosure By-law instead of the Fence By-law; ottawapoolinstallation.ca covers that.

After the locate is done and any fence work is complete, keep the written contract, the itemized quote, the locate confirmation and photos of where the posts went; those records are worth holding onto long after the crew has left.

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Q2

## Do I need a locate to replace fence posts in Kanata?

Yes, replacing fence posts requires digging, and Ontario's Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 requires a locate request before any digging, including pulling and resetting individual posts. This applies in Kanata the same as anywhere else in Ottawa.

The locate request goes through Ontario Dig Authority. Their guidance says a request is required for any project that breaks ground, regardless of size or depth. Ontario Dig Authority does not mark the lines itself; each utility sends its own locator. The Act requires a locate request, and Ontario Dig Authority asks for it at least 5 business days before you dig. A standard request can be made no more than 30 days before the dig, and the service is free.

Whoever digs is the excavator under the Act. If you hire a contractor, the contractor is the excavator and is responsible for submitting the request. If you are doing the work yourself, that responsibility is yours. Either way, it is worth confirming in writing who is submitting the request before the job starts.

One thing to ask about: privately owned lines running from the house to a garage, shed or other structure on the property. We found no statement from Ontario Dig Authority either way on whether those are marked, so ask about

any private lines on your property before the digging starts.

On the fence itself, the City of Ottawa Fence By-law, as published on ottawa.ca, still applies after a post replacement. Because "erect" under the by-law includes alter and relocate, if the work changes the fence's position or height, the result must meet the current by-law limits. If the fence was built before January 1, 2004 under an older municipality's rules and sits above today's limits, ask By-law Services before changing it.

After the job is done, keep the written contract and itemized quote, the locate confirmation number or documentation, and photos showing where the fence sits on the property. Those records are straightforward to store and useful to have if a question about the fence's position or condition comes up later.

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Q3

## Are locates free for a small fence job in Nepean?

Yes, locate requests are free. The Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 requires anyone who digs, including with a hand shovel, to request a locate before breaking ground, and the request costs nothing regardless of the size of the job.

The request goes through Ontario Dig Authority. Their guidance says to submit at least 5 business days before you dig, and the utilities have up to 5 business days to respond. Ontario Dig Authority does not mark the lines itself; each utility sends its own locator. A standard request can be made no more than 30 days before the planned dig date.

The law uses the word "excavator" for anyone who breaks ground. On a hired job, the contractor is the excavator and carries the obligation to request the locate. On a do-it-yourself job, the homeowner is the excavator. Either way, the request must be made and answered before any post hole is dug, even a single one for a small fence in Nepean.

One thing worth asking your installer: whether they will handle the locate request or expect you to. Get the answer in writing before work starts. Also ask about any private lines on your property, such as a line running to a garage, shed or outdoor structure. We found no statement from Ontario Dig Authority on whether privately owned lines will be marked, so raise the question directly when you submit or when the locator visits.

If you are getting quotes from more than one installer, put the following side by side in writing before choosing: the height and material specified, the total length of the run, the post method and depth the installer is quoting, gates listed as their own line with a separate price, and removal and disposal of any existing fence, including whether posts are set in concrete.

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Q4

## Who requests the locate, me or the fence installer, in Ottawa?

The short answer: whoever digs is the excavator under Ontario's Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, and the excavator is the one who must submit the locate request before any digging starts.

On a hired job, that is the fence installer. On a do-it-yourself job, that is you.

A few practical points worth knowing before the post holes go in:

- Locate requests are free, and Ontario Dig Authority asks for them at least 5 business days before digging starts.
- A standard request can be made no more than 30 days before the dig date.
- Ontario Dig Authority does not mark the lines itself; each utility sends its own locator.
- If you have private lines on your property, such as a line running to a garage or shed, ask about those separately, as we found no Ontario Dig Authority statement confirming they will be marked.

When you are getting quotes, it is worth asking each installer directly whether requesting the locate is included in their process and who they expect to coordinate with the locators on site. A written contract should be clear on this point. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, any direct agreement over $50 must be in writing and delivered to you, and you have 10 days after receiving that written copy to cancel without reason.
If you are ready to get quotes from local Ottawa fence installers, the request form on this site sends your project details to installers listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Fences. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any fence project. Fences in Ottawa must meet the City's Fence By-law, and a free locate is required before digging any post hole. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawafences.ca** for the latest answers.