DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

Frequently asked questions and answers

Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Program

Are there training requirements for individuals seeking to install underground telecommunications in Minnesota?

Yes. Minnesota Statutes 326B.198 was passed into law in 2024 and requires that the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), in consultation with the Office of Broadband Development, approve standards for the Safety-Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer Certification Program. This certification requirement applies to the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure that is located within 10 feet of existing underground utilities or that crosses the existing underground utilities. This work must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers pursuant to the effective dates outlined in statute.

This program requires individuals seeking to become certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer to complete 40 hours of training (and pass an exam), which requires both classroom and hands-on instruction.

The legislation also requires that certified installers obtain four hours of refresher training to be completed within three years of completing the initial 40-hour course, and every three years thereafter, to maintain certification.

Who will provide the training and education that is needed for one to be certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer?

Interested training providers will develop their own training programs, exams and refresher courses. Once developed, training providers must submit their training content to DLI for review and approval.

Who will approve the initial training courses, exams and refresher courses?

DLI, in consultation with the Office of Broadband Development.

By what date(s) must the installation of applicable underground telecommunication systems be performed by certified installers?

Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure subject to Minn. Stat. 326B.198, throughout Minnesota, must be performed by safety-qualified underground telecommunications installers.

What type of classroom training is acceptable for training providers?

Classroom training can be live in-person, live online, self-paced online, or a combination of all three types of training. Best practices suggest that interested training providers do not lean heavily on self-paced online instruction as this mode of instruction does not engage learners as effectively as other methods of classroom instruction.

Are there mandatory allocations of time for training providers as it relates to classroom instruction and hands-on training?

No. Training providers are encouraged to provide effective and interactive trainings. Trainings must include an initial 40-hour certification course, which includes both classroom and hands-on instruction. The hours allotted to each method of instruction will be determined by training providers. Best practices suggest that at least 24 hours of training be dedicated to hands-on training, with the remaining 16 hours dedicated to classroom instruction.

Will there by a required minimum number of questions on the exams developed by training providers?

No. However, prospective certified installers must demonstrate knowledge of the course material by successfully completing an exam approved by DLI. Best practices suggest that providers include at least 50 exam questions for a 40-hour training program. Further, although the statute does not require a specific passing rate for these exams, it is recommended that a passing score of 70% or higher be established.

Will DLI be auditing approved training programs/providers?

DLI reserves the right to audit an approved training program or provider to ensure that training is being delivered as submitted for approval.

Who will provide the certificates of course completion and certification cards to installers after they have completed the 40-hour course and passed the exam?

DLI-recognized training providers are responsible for certifying installers who meet the training and exam requirements, providing certification cards, and maintaining records of certified installers.

Who is the point contact for DLI for training providers and interested stakeholders?

Don Sivigny, Supervisor, Education, Rules, Codes, and Grants, 651-284-5874 or don.sivigny@state.mn.us

Does every worker onsite during the installation of underground telecommunications work need to be certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer?

No. Only the individual(s) performing the scopes of work outlined in MS 326B.198 are required to be certified.

Can partial credit be awarded to individual(s) who already have experience in performing underground telecommunications work, in order to decrease the 40-hour training requirement?

Yes. During the 2025 legislative session a bill was passed which allows individuals to potentially receive credit for past approved training experience from an approved training provider. Specifically, an approved training provider may apply for approval of classroom instruction course material delivered up to two years prior to becoming an approved training provider and before January 1, 2026, as being equivalent or substantially equivalent to classroom instruction course material that is contained in the approved program. An application must provide a copy of all written materials used for the training for which equivalent credit is sought, the specific subjects covered in the training, the name and qualifications of the training provider, a description of the delivery method for the training, and the date of the training. Once approved, a training provider may grant full or partial retroactive credit for completion of classroom instruction training delivered prior to the commissioner's decision to approve a program. A person granted retroactive credit must successfully complete the examination that the training provider is approved to administer in order to be certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer.

All individuals seeking to become certified as a safety-qualified underground telecommunications installer will need to successfully pass the related exam.

Are department-recognized training providers allowed to incorporate hands-on training for program participants at active underground telecommunication work jobsites as part of the required 40-hour training?

Yes.