

Chapter 17.20
Undergrounding of Utilities

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17.20.010 Underground Utility Policy. With the increased use of the properties and streets within the city, the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the city require that electrical, telephone, and TV cable facilities be located or relocated underground as soon as practical.

17.20.020 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter, the term electrical or communication facilities means electric power, telephone, telegraph, and cable television facilities, provided, however that the terms shall not include the following facilities:

- A. Electric utility substations, surface mounted transformers, and switching facilities;
- B. Street lighting standards;
- C. Telephone pedestals and other equivalent communication facilities;
- D. Police and fire sirens or any similar municipal equipment, including traffic control equipment.

17.20.030 Underground Installation required.

A. All electrical and communication facilities other than electrical or communication services located on private property shall be installed underground by the utility owning said facility in the following cases:

1. When it becomes necessary to remove or relocate existing overhead facilities for a distance of three hundred feet (300') or more because of a roadway widening project or other similar reason.
2. When existing overhead facilities for a distance of over three hundred (300') are to be replaced, provided, however, this provision shall not apply to replacements due solely to casualty damage nor to replacement of wire or cable only.
3. When any electrical or communication facilities are extended beyond those facilities existing on the effective date of this chapter.
4. When another utility having facilities along the same street or easement places its facilities underground for a distance of over three hundred feet (300').

B. All undergrounding of facilities within public right-of-way initiated by utilities and covered by this ordinance must have approval of the City Council or its representatives prior to undertaking such project.

C. All electrical and communication services located on private property shall be installed underground by the owner of the property in the following cases:

1. All new electrical and communication services from an underground facility to service connections shall be installed underground. All new electrical and communication services from an overhead facility to service connections may be installed overhead, however, the property owner may elect to have the service installed underground.

2. All rebuilt or relocated electrical or communication service lines from an underground facility to service connections shall be installed underground. All rebuilt or relocated electrical communication service lines from an overhead facility may be installed overhead, however, the property owner may elect to have the service installed underground.

3. All existing electrical and communication services shall be converted to underground by the owner or owners of the property upon which said services are located within ninety (90) days after notification by the city in accordance with RCW 35.96.050 or as it may be amended, that underground facilities are available.

17.20.040 Cost. The cost and expense of relocating the existing facilities, or installing new facilities, underground, shall be borne by the serving utilities and/or the owners of the real property served and/or persons applying for such underground service in accordance with the applicable filed tariffs, or the rules and regulations, or the published policies of the respective utilities furnishing such service or as may be contractually agreed upon between the utility and such owner or applicant.

17.20.050 Variances:

A. A variance from the underground installation requirements of this chapter may be granted by the Zillah City Council upon application of the utility or property owner concerned if it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Zillah City Council that the variance is in the interests of the general health, welfare, and safety of the residents of the City of Zillah and traveling public and one of the following conditions exists:

1. It is technologically unsound to require undergrounding of a particular location; or
2. That the costs of the underground installation, when compared to overhead installation, is disproportionate in comparison to the benefit to be gained by the property and/or public and is disproportionately high when compared to other properties or locations; or
3. Where the area in which undergrounding is required has not established a sufficient growth pattern to permit the determination of ultimate facility requirements to major transmission routes.

B. When granting a variance, the Zillah City Council may attach conditions to the granting of said variance including placing a time limit on the duration of such variance.