

S.U.E. Quality Levels

Highway plans typically contain disclaimers as to the quality of utility information. The use of quality levels in the SUE process allows designers to certify on the plans that a certain level of accuracy and comprehensiveness has been provided. There are four quality levels:

- **Quality Level D** information comes solely from existing utility records. It may provide an overall "feel" for the congestion of utilities, but it is often highly limited in terms of comprehensiveness and accuracy. Its usefulness should be confined to project planning and route selection activities.
- **Quality Level C** involves surveying visible above-ground utility facilities, such as manholes, valve boxes, posts, etc., and correlating this information with existing utility records. When using this information, it is not unusual to find that many underground utilities have been either omitted or erroneously plotted. Its usefulness, therefore, should be confined to rural projects where utilities are not prevalent, or are not too expensive to repair or relocate.
- **Quality Level B** involves the use of surface geophysical techniques to determine the existence and horizontal position of underground utilities. This activity is called "designating". Two-dimensional mapping information is obtained. This information is usually sufficient to accomplish preliminary engineering goals. Decisions can be made on where to place storm drainage systems, footers, foundations, and other design features in order to avoid conflicts with existing utilities. Slight adjustments in the design can produce substantial cost savings by eliminating utility relocations.
- **Quality Level A** involves the use of nondestructive digging equipment at critical points to determine the precise horizontal and vertical position of underground utilities, as well as the type, size, condition, material, and other characteristics. This activity is called "locating." It is the highest level presently available. When surveyed and mapped, precise plan and profile information are available for use in making final design decisions. By knowing exactly where a utility is positioned in three dimensions, the designer can often make small adjustments in elevations or horizontal locations and avoid the need to relocate utilities. Additional information such as utility material, condition, size, soil contamination, and paving thickness also assists the designer and utility owner in their decisions.

The end product (the CADD file or project plans) may contain any or all of these quality levels.