

Tracer Wire Frequently Asked Questions

What is tracer wire?

Tracer wire, also known as locator or locating wire, is used to assist in locating pipes and other lines once they have been buried in the ground. Once a pipe is laid down the tracer wire is placed along the pipe and buried next to it. To find the pipe, a wire tracer is used to find the tracer wire. A wire tracer is an aboveground device with the ability to locate the non-energized wire. There is no need to send electricity through the tracer wire. The use of tracer wire allows for a more accurate dig for repairs, replacement, or maintenance. The wire is most commonly used in utilities such as water, sewer, gas, telecommunication, etc. Each color designates a different use, see color chart below.



What is CCS tracer wire?

CCS stands for copper-clad steel, this kind of tracer wire has a steel core with a copper clad coating. The two metals are bonded together with heat and pressure. The copper and steel are inseparable after the cladding process is complete. CCS offers the strength of steel with the conductivity and corrosion-resistant properties of copper. Our copper-clad steel tracer wire is insulated with a high-density polyethylene (HDPE) jacket which is designed for direct burial use.

Are there advantages of using copper-clad steel instead of solid copper tracer wire?

- Reduced material cost
- Longer term and more stable pricing
- Reduced threat of theft due to lack of after-market value
- Twice the breaking strength
- More durable, fewer breaks, longer lasting
- Lower shipping and handling costs due to the material's light weight

Will a locating signal travel as far on CCS tracer wire as on solid copper tracer wire?

Tracer wire is an alternating current (AC) application, the signal frequency is what determines the appropriate conductivity (copper thickness) due to the skin effect. Skin effect is the tendency for alternating current to flow mostly near the outer surface of a solid conductor than the inner surface. As a result, locating signals will travel as far on CCS as it would with standard copper tracer wire.

For more details about our tracer wire please view our brochure and spec sheets. Also check out our **Tracer Wire vs. THHN** page for details on why THHN should **NOT** be used as tracer wire!