

# Hydro Excavation is Expensive!

## How Do I Get Good Value?

### Need hydro excavation?

Hire someone with a hydro excavator. Don't hire a guy with a sewer jetter or a water blaster or a vacuum truck with a pressure washer. Hire the guy who has the truck that was built for your application.

Use the right tool for the job. Put those other trucks on the jobs they were designed for, and hire a hydro excavator to expose underground utilities. At the end of the day your jobsite will be safer, cleaner, dryer... and it will be cheaper.

**News Flash: All hydrovac trucks and crews are not the same.** Even among trucks designed to be hydro excavators, there are differences. Does the truck have water pressure and water flow that can be dialed up or down depending on the soil conditions?

This can be critical in excavating older and deteriorating underground lines. Does the truck have enough water and debris capacity to dig at least half a day without having to leave the jobsite to dump?



**Wide duct bank being excavated/installed in a congested gas plant in West Texas.**

Too much drive time off the job can cost you more than you think. If you are working on a street or highway, is the truck within the legal weight limit in your state when it shows up on the jobsite loaded with water and ready to work? You may be incurring liability for an overweight truck when you don't even know it.

In the winter, does the truck have a boiler on board to heat the water to a temperature that will melt frozen ground? If not, you will pay more than you need to for the excavation, guaranteed. Ask truck questions of your potential supplier and make sure you get clear and detailed answers before going to work.



**Hydrovac has become the standard for excavation work inside gas and electric facilities (Texas).**



Contrary to what you may have been told, it's not about the hourly rate. It's actually about the cost of the specific amount of soil that was moved on your job. This should be calculated, or estimated, in dollars per cubic yard. If Hydrovac Company A charges \$300 per hour and removes two yards of soil in that hour, their actual cost is \$150 per yard. If Company B only charges a "bargain" \$200 per hour but moves only a yard of soil in that time, they seem drastically cheaper by the hour, but their actual cost is \$200 per yard, so Company A is a better deal because they are more efficient with your money.

We see this discrepancy constantly, and it is the single biggest error that the customer makes when hiring a hydrovac excavation company; they see only the hourly rate and overpay by tens of thousands of dollars sometimes, just because they never measure the actual productivity of their contractor. It's like hiring someone by the hour to build you a house. You would never do that, because you don't know how efficient they are. Find out how efficient your potential hydrovac contractor is before work starts, if possible. Ask for references. Ask for an estimate, or even a hard bid. Hold your service provider to his promises, and look beyond the hourly rate. Better yet, pay him by the cubic yard if the volumes are relatively easy to calculate.

**Do a review - and do your math - at the end of the job.**



Finally, take the time to sit down with your hydrovac excavation company and do an assessment and review at the end of the job

This is particularly important if you see hydrovac being used more in your company's future. This means a safety review, a review of downtime or non-productive times the truck was off the job for whatever reason (repairs, getting water, dumping), crew preparation and professionalism, attitude, housekeeping, whatever factors are important to you when it comes to choosing a contractor next time. You should also by all means measure the holes, add up the invoices, and figure out your actual cost per cubic yard.

This is critical. It's the most important calculation you will make. We'll assume your job was completed safely and the technology performed as expected, but only you can determine whether it was worth the cost and whether you hired the right company.

Taking these few simple precautions will ensure that you don't cost yourself, or your company, a lot of money with substandard results. Granted, the technology is expensive, but you can still be a financial hero and keep the jobsite safe at the same time.

