

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2020 SESSION

CHAPTER 666

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 56-257.5, relating to underground utility lines; agricultural operation.

[H 723]

Approved April 6, 2020

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 56-257.5 as follows:

§ 56-257.5. Manner of installing underground utility lines through agricultural operation.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Topsoil" means at least 12 inches of the surface soil layer or a six-inch layer of soil that includes the surface soil and the unconsolidated subsoil immediately below it.

"Underground utility line" means an underground pipeline or conduit of an inside diameter greater than 12 inches or an underground electrical transmission or distribution line of a capacity greater than 115 kilovolts.

B. Every operator, as defined in § 56-265.15, having the right to install an underground utility line shall install such underground utility line in accordance with regulations adopted pursuant to subsection C.

C. The Commission shall adopt regulations applicable to any operator that is subject to the provisions of subsection B. The regulations shall require that if such operator, in the course of installing the underground utility line, disturbs an area of land that measures 10,000 square feet or more and constitutes one or more agricultural operations, as defined in § 3.2-300, the operator shall, if desired by the landowner or land management agency, either (i) redistribute the topsoil removed from the disturbed area to graded areas elsewhere on the land of the affected property owner or (ii) if insufficient graded areas are available as sites for such redistribution, stockpile the topsoil removed from the disturbed area until it can be redistributed on the area initially disturbed. The regulations shall require that redistributed topsoil be placed on scarified land and that stockpiled topsoil be protected from erosion and compaction. If the property owner does not agree, then the topsoil shall be disposed of in accordance with applicable law.