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Smart Utility Locator

BY JEFF KIRBY

Whenever you need to excavate any portion of the existing terrain, it's always a good idea to call your local "before-you-dig" number. But sometimes, you need to know the location of a utility underground in a pinch and cannot wait for a tech to come and spray out the location for you. In those instances, it would be extremely convenient to be able to grab a Leica DD230 Smart Utility Locator out of your truck and quickly set up and mark out exactly where the utility is.

I had the opportunity to use a DD 230 locator on several projects this past fall, and it allowed me to mark out utilities easily, quickly, accurately, and conveniently. Among its many extremely helpful qualities is its IP66 rating (meaning it is dustproof and waterproof), so it can be used whenever and wherever, regardless of weather conditions. And its built-in "Good-to-Go" health self-check system can pinpoint and troubleshoot any system issues it may be having, so you can have confidence in its accuracy.

The unit provides depth estimation up to 10 meters (33 feet) below ground level. That's nice, because you can see not only where pipes and cables are located, but also how deep they are. This allows you to know that if you are not planning to dig as far down as the utility is, you are in the clear. It also allows you to know just how far down you need to go if you plan on unearthing the utility for any reason.

One of the things that surprised me was that the unit didn't come with any long-winded instruction manuals. This is because all of the instructions are on its large screen, giving it a real "plug-n-play" feel when you insert the battery and start using the equipment—which I loved.

Last, but definitely not least, I have to mention the unit's smart technology. This equipment has the ability to connect via Bluetooth to your phone or tablet, and with the GPS technology, you're able to essentially map out the location of the utilities on plans. I personally didn't have a need for this level of functionality but am impressed by this equipment's capabilities.

At around \$2,300 (for the locator only; the kit shown at left with the DA230 signal transmitter and carrying case runs about \$3,500), the DD230 is not inexpensive. But when you compare that cost to the peace of mind it offers when you are in a jam and need to locate a utility on a moment's notice, it is well worth every penny.

If you are doing site work on a regular basis for which you need to know what is underground and where, I highly recommend acquiring a Leica DD230 Smart Utility Locator. leica-geosystems.com

Jeff Kirby is a project manager with Graulich Builders in Lewes, Del.



The Leica DD230 Smart Utility Locator features a bright display that is easy to read, even in sunny conditions. The locator is sold alone or in a kit that includes a carrying bag and a DA230 1-watt signal transmitter, which improves underground utility detection.

Easy-Leveling Extension Ladder

BY TIM UHLER

Because we don't typically deal with electrical hazards, we've always used aluminum extension ladders to access roofs or—when coupled with another ladder, a pair of ladder jacks, and a plank—to install siding. Aluminum ladders don't feel as sturdy to me as ladders made of fiberglass, but they're a lot lighter and easier to move around, especially on uneven ground. Sure, we can dig holes into the ground to level our ladders, but they still don't feel all that stable to me.

For the last year or so, we've been using Little Giant's Hyperlite SumoStance fiberglass extension ladder, which is lighter than similar fiberglass ladders and a little heavier than our aluminum ladders. It's a worthwhile trade-off: The Sumo flexes less and feels more stable. But I think the best feature is the legs. Not only can you adjust them individually for uneven ground, but you can also widen them to stabilize the ladder. Both features have worked well (though the legs stopped sliding on our first test ladder, and no one could figure out

why. The second test model that the company sent to us has worked flawlessly).

In addition to the leveling and outrigger system, the Sumo has a side-to-side bubble level and a front-to-back angle indicator to help set the ladder up safely. The ladder feet can also be set to flat or spiked positions, depending on where it is being used. This non-conductive OSHA-compliant ladder is a big improvement over our old aluminum ladders, and we are very protective of it because we like it so much (other trades on our sites keep asking to borrow it).

We've been using the 28-foot Type 1AA (up to 375 pounds) version, but the SumoStance is also available as a Type 1A (up to 300 pounds) in lengths from 16 to 40 feet. The model we're using lists for about \$700 directly from Little Giant. littlegiantladder.com

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The SumoStance fiberglass extension ladder features a high-visibility, bright-green color, a side-mounted dual-pulley lift system, outrigger-style legs that double the width of the base and are adjustable for uneven ground, and built-in side-to-side and front-to-back bubble levels to help set the ladder up safely.

Photos by Tim Uhler