**California Underground Safety Board**

**November 9-10, 2026**

**Agenda Item No. 18 Information Item - Staff Report**

*Draft Regulations for Planning and Design Information Exchange*

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**SUMMARY**
The staff report presents the draft regulations for the Planning and Design Information Exchange required under Government Code section 4216.1(b)(1)[1]. Staff recommend the Board approves opening a public comment period to obtain stakeholder feedback on the draft regulations.

**STRATEGIC PLAN**
2020 Strategic Plan Objective: Improve Accessibility of Buried Infrastructure Location Knowledge and Understanding

2023 Plan Activity: Develop a Planning and Design Ticket

**BACKGROUND**

**Problem Statement**

Planning and design of an Infrastructure Project requires early access to subsurface utility records to identify subsurface installation conflicts, evaluate efficient routes, and prevent costly construction redesigns. However, California law previously provided no standardized method for Designers to obtain subsurface installation information before excavation begins under Government Code section 4216.2[2]. Consequently, Designers have relied on informal approaches, such as ad-hoc Operator inquiries or submitting intent-to-excavate (811) notifications during the planning stage, resulting in inconsistent access to information, misallocated resources across all parties, and undue burdens on utility Operators.

[1] California Code, GOV 4216.1.
[2] California Code, GOV 4216.2.

### Planning and Design Information Exchange

Added through Senate Bill 254 (Becker, Chapter 119, Statutes of 2025)[3], Government Code section 4216.1(b)(1) directs the Underground Safety Board (Board), by July 1, 2027, to adopt regulations establishing timelines, standard processes, required information, and data formats for a Planning and Design Information Exchange. The Planning and Design Information Exchange must be facilitated by California's regional notification centers (RNCs), Underground Service Alert of Northern California and Nevada (USA North 811) and Underground Service Alert of Southern California (DigAlert), and every subsurface installation Operator, except the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), is required to participate. Additionally, Government Code section 4216.1(b)(4) requires the RNCs to submit proposed implementation procedures to the Board for public comment, review, and formal approval before any substantive changes or implementation [4].

### Stakeholder Outreach

During 2026, Board staff conducted targeted stakeholder outreach for the development of these regulations. Each workshop and survey was focused on specific operational and technical topics to gather industry input across utility Operators, Designers, Excavators, Project Owners, and the RNCs:

- January 6, 2026, Public Workshop [5] (Data fields and digital formats): Focused on identifying essential data fields for a standardized statewide Design Request and Response, as well as evaluating commonly used digital formats to enable consistent, usable Planning and Design Information Exchange across Operators, excavators, Designers, and RNCs.
- February 24, 2026, Public Workshop [6] (Workflows, timelines, and roles): Focused on establishing standard procedures for how planning and Design Requests are issued, managed, and resolved, defining clear roles and responsibilities across Designers, Project Owners, Operators, and RNCs, and evaluating feasible Operator response timelines.
- April 2026 Statewide Stakeholder Surveys [7] (Current practices and operational constraints):
    1. Utility Operator Survey: Captured input across gas, electric, water, sewer, telecom, petroleum, and locating contractors. Respondents provided responses on achievable response timelines, common delay scenarios such as non-digitized records, the unavailability of depth information for older infrastructure, preferred data formats, and opinions on cost recovery and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs).

[3] Bill Text - SB-254 Energy
[4] California Code, GOV 4216.4.
[5] January 2026 - Planning and Design Workshop: Notice and Agenda. The video recording of the workshop can be found here.
[6] February 2026 - Planning and Design Workshop: Notice and Agenda. The video recording of the workshop can be found here.
[7] April 2026 Staff Report – Planning and Design Information Exchange Update – Attachment 1 Stakeholder Comment Analysis

2. Designer and Excavator Survey: Captured input from Designers, civil engineers, land surveyors, general contractors, and Project Owners. Respondents detailed current informal practices and wait times, preferences for digital formats, and the need for clear information regarding record quality and map updates to help with field verification.

- June 3, 2026, Public Workshop[8] (RNC capabilities, security, and cost recovery): Focused on evaluating the technical and operational capabilities of California's RNCs to facilitate the Planning and Design Information Exchange and track compliance, alongside structured discussions on data security, NDAs, and cost recovery practices.

A comprehensive analysis of the collected stakeholder feedback and policy development was presented to the Board in the August 2026 staff report[9]. The collective insights gathered across these workshops, surveys, and public comment opportunities at Board meetings directly shaped the proposed draft regulations, included as Attachment A.

## DISCUSSION: OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS

The complete text of the proposed regulations is provided in attachment A. The following overview summarizes the Planning and Design Information Exchange process and outlines the core requirements for each participant group.

### Definitions (§ 4605)

To establish clear operational boundaries across the Planning and Design Information Exchange, Section 4605 of the draft regulations includes existing terms and defines new terms.

Existing statutory definitions in Govt Code Sec 4216:

1. *Board*
2. *Excavation*
3. *Operator* (excluding Caltrans),
4. *Regional notification center*,
5. *Subsurface installation*, and
6. *Working day.*

List of new definitions for implementation of Govt Code Sec 4216.1(b)(1):

1. *Designer*,
2. *Planning and Design Information*,
3. *Design Response*,
4. *Design Request*,
5. *Infrastructure Project*,
6. *Online Portal,*
7. *Planning and Design Information Exchange*,
8. *Project Area*, and

[8] June 2026 - Planning and Design Workshop: Notice and Agenda. The video recording of the workshop can be found here.

[9] August 2026 Staff Report – Planning and Design Information Exchange: Regulatory Development Update

9. *Project Owner.*

**RNC Implementation and Procedures Approval (§ 4606 and § 4607)**

RNCs will facilitate the Planning and Information Exchange. Rather than storing or hosting the information being shared, RNCs will track and facilitate the communication between the Operator and the Designer or Project Owner. Their responsibilities include:

*Procedures Approval and Launch (§ 4606)*

Within 60 days of publication of these regulations, each RNC must submit proposed implementation procedures to the Board covering implementation procedures of the Planning and Design Information Exchange, for example, notification and communication tracking, Design Request and Response processes, late/non-response reporting, and other requirements in the regulations. After submission of RNC procedures at a Board meeting followed by 30-day written public comment period, RNCs must address the public comments and resubmit their procedures for formal Board approval at a subsequent meeting. Every RNC must launch a fully functional Planning and Design Information Exchange by January 1, 2028, and any substantial changes to the submitted procedures will require public comment and Board approval.

*Operations and Recordkeeping (§ 4607)*

Each RNC must maintain an Online Portal where Designers or Project Owners can electronically submit Design Requests or revisions to existing Design Requests. Upon submission, the RNC provides a copy to the Designer or Project Owner and routes the Design Request, along with the response due date, to all affected Operators in the Project Area. RNCs must maintain a 3-year administrative record for each request (logging submission timestamps, Operators notified, Operator receipt confirmations, extensions requested, completion notifications, and revisions) and operate a complaint process that allows reporting of late, incomplete, or insufficient responses.

**Designers and Project Owners: Submitting a Design Request (§ 4608)**

Only a Designer or Project Owner is authorized to initiate a Design Request through the Planning and Design Information Exchange. Design Requests must be submitted at least 60 working days prior to planned excavation, though requestors do not need to wait the full 60 days to submit an 811 excavation ticket if an Operator responds earlier. Each submission requires standardized project information, including contact, project description, the expected construction start date, and geographic boundary data (such as coordinates or street addresses) sufficient to identify the Project Area. If the Project Area changes or additional information is requested, the Designer or Project Owner must submit a revised request.

To ensure system integrity and protect utility data, requestors must digitally sign the submission under penalty of perjury to verify their identity and confirm the records will be used strictly for project's planning and design purposes. Additionally, the Planning and Design Information Exchange requires Designers or Project Owners to confirm that submitting a Design Request does not replace or fulfill the obligation to submit an 811 ticket before excavating.

**Utility Operators: Response Timelines, Design Information, and Tracking (§ 4609–4612)**

Operators must cooperate with the RNCs to facilitate the Planning and Design Information Exchange. Upon receiving a Design Request, an Operator may not withhold a Design Response on confidentiality grounds or condition its response on the execution of an NDA or other contract. Operators must fulfill three core obligations:

- Operator Design Response Timelines and Extensions (§ 4610): Operators must send a Design Response directly to the Designer or Project Owner within 30 working days of receiving the Design Request. An Operator may request a 15-working day extension by notifying both the Designer or Project Owner and the RNC before the initial 30-working day timeline expires. Alternatively, the Operator and Designer or Project Owner may mutually agree to an alternative timeline beyond the standard Operator response timeline or extension, provided the Operator notifies the RNC and provides evidence of mutual agreement.
- Design Response Content (§ 4611): All Design Responses must include up-to-date contact information. If subsurface installations are present, the Operator must provide either all information in its possession for the Project Area, or a subset of records (for example, including relevant maps, engineering drawings, as-builts, geographic information system (GIS) data, and installation type specifications) adequate to identify facility locations. If providing a subset of records, a disclaimer stating that only a subset of information is being provided is required. Any maps provided must include the date of the last known update and the quality level of the subsurface installation in accordance with the most recently published edition of the American Society of Civil Engineers 38-22 standard (ASCE: Standard Guideline for Investigating and Documenting Existing Utilities) or be designated as Quality Level D if the quality level is unknown, unverified, or was not previously established[10].
- Notifying RNC (§ 4612): To maintain the RNC's role as a facilitator of the Planning and Design and Design Information Exchange, Operators must electronically notify the RNC within two business day of receiving a Design Request, at the time any extension or alternative deadline is requested, and within one working day of sending the Design Response to the Designer or Project Owner.

**Associated Fees (§ 4613)**

Under the proposed regulations, no fee may be charged, collected, or received for any activity under the Planning and Design Information Exchange, including submitting Design Requests or providing design responses.

[10] ASCE Standard 38-22 establishes four utility data quality levels from lowest to highest reliability: Quality Level D (information derived solely from existing utility records or oral recollections), Quality Level C (records correlated with surveyed visible surface features), Quality Level B (approximate horizontal location identified via surface geophysical methods), and Quality Level A (precise horizontal and vertical location verified through non-destructive physical exposure/potholing). *See Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Subsurface Utility Engineering*

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend the Board approves opening a public comment period to obtain stakeholder feedback on the draft Planning and Design Information Exchange regulations.

## ATTACHMENT

Attachment A: Draft Planning and Design Information Exchange Regulations

Draft Planning and Design Information Exchange Regulations

Recommend adding a new Chapter 6 - Planning and Design to Title 19, Division 4.

Article 1 – General

§ 4604 – Purpose, Scope, and Application

(a) The purpose of the regulatory standards promulgated by the Underground Safety Board in this division is to implement California Government Code section 4216.1(b)(1), which requires that all of the State's regional notification centers implement a Planning and Design Information Exchange.
(b) Compliance with this Chapter does not exempt any person or entity from complying with any other applicable law or regulation, including Government Code sections 4216.2 and 4216.3.

§ 4605 – Definitions

The following definitions shall apply to the regulations contained in this Chapter:

(a) "Board" has the same meaning as in Government Code section 4216(b).
(b) "Designer" means any civil engineer, land surveyor, architect, excavator as defined in Government Code section 4216(h), or other professional that is preparing drawings, specifications, or project plans that require or anticipate excavation in the identified Project Area.
(c) "Planning and Design Information" includes records, maps, data, and/or drawings that identify and/or locate the Operator's subsurface installations in a Project Area.
(d) "Design Response" means the Planning and Design Information an Operator sends to a Designer or Project Owner.
(e) "Design Request" means a request from a Designer or Project Owner to a regional notification center to receive Planning and Design Information from Operators as described in this Chapter.
(f) "Excavation" has the same meaning as in Government Code section 4216(g).
(g) "Infrastructure Project" means any project that requires excavation.
(h) "Online Portal" means a web-based platform hosted by a regional notification center through which Design Requests and Design Responses can be facilitated.
(i) "Operator" has the same meaning as in Government Code section 4216(o) except "Operator" as used in this Chapter does not include the California Department of Transportation.
(j) "Planning and Design Information Exchange" means the process by which a Designer or Project Owner submits Design Requests through a regional notification center, and

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Operators provide a Design Response with utility records, maps, or drawings to support planning and design.

(k) "Project Area" means the location where a Designer or Project Owner plans to excavate.

(l) "Project Owner" means the responsible individual, group of individuals, or legal entity that has the right, through ownership or financial contract, to construct an Infrastructure Project in an identified Project Area.

(m) "Regional notification center" has the same meaning as in Government Code section 4216(q).

(n) "Subsurface installation" has the same meaning as in Government Code section 4216(s).

(o) "Working day" has the same meaning as in Government Code 4216(v).

## Article 2 – Regional Notification Centers

### § 4606 – Implementation and Procedures Approval

(a) No later than 60 days after this Chapter is published to the California Code of Regulations Register, every regional notification center in California must submit its proposed procedures to implement the Planning and Design Information Exchange to the Board pursuant to Government Code section 4216.1(b)(4). These proposed procedures must be submitted to the Board using the Board's established process for formal submissions. The proposed procedures must include Planning and Design Information Exchange processes for the regional notification center that satisfy all requirements of this Chapter, and must include specific procedures regarding the following:

i. The general user interface for the Planning and Design Information Exchange Online Portal and the user interface for the submission of required information for Design Requests;

ii. Processes for facilitation and tracking communications between and among the regional notification center, Operator, and Designer or Project Owner;

iii. Process for issuing revised Design Requests and updated response deadlines when a Design Request is modified or extended;

iv. The mechanism for recording and reporting late Design Responses or non-responses to the Board;

v. The exact language and location in the user interface and standard communications of all disclaimers required by this Chapter; and

vi. The following statement: "Any interested person or group may submit comments on the proposed procedures, either verbally at the [DATE] meeting of the Underground Safety Board, or in writing. Written comments are due on [insert date]. Written

comments must be sent via email to the following email addresses: [insert email addresses]".

vii. All other processes needed to implement the Planning and Design Information Exchange that meet the requirements of this Chapter.

(b) Each regional notification center must present its proposed Planning and Design Information Exchange implementation procedures at a Board meeting held after the proposed procedures are formally submitted to the Board, with the specific dates and agendas of the meeting to be determined by the Board.

(c) Any stakeholder may submit public comments on one or more of the proposed Planning and Design Information Exchange implementation procedures submitted by the regional notification centers either verbally during the Board meeting at which they are presented or in writing after the Board meeting. Written public comments must be submitted to the regional notification centers and the Board via email within 30 days of the date of the Board meeting at which the regional notification centers present their proposed procedures to the Board. In the event the Board meeting covers more than one day, written comments will be due within 30 days of the last day of the meeting.

(d) Following the public comment period, each regional notification center shall revise its proposed procedures, provide all public comments and changes made to the Board, provide a written explanation if no revisions were made, and resubmit the procedures for Board approval at the next scheduled Board meeting.

(e) The Board will designate the meeting at which it will vote to approve or deny the regional notification centers' proposed procedures. This Board meeting must occur at least 60 days after the Board meeting at which the regional notification centers presented their proposed procedures. At least 15 days prior to this Board meeting, any regional notification center that revised its proposed procedures must formally submit them to the Board for approval and make them publicly available on the regional notification center's website. The Board will allow public comment on any revised procedures presented to the Board at the Board meeting, either in person or in writing prior to the Board meeting.

(f) Any proposed procedures, revised proposed procedures, public comments, and any other documents presented to the Board must adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act and requirements in California Government Code 7405.

(g) The Board must vote to formally adopt or deny the proposed procedures. Upon approval by a vote of the Board, a regional notification center's procedures will be binding. If the Board denies the proposed procedures, the regional notification center shall review and resubmit the procedures, using the procedure outlined above, for approval before implementation.

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(h) No later than January 1, 2028, every regional notification center in California must have a functional Planning and Design Information Exchange available for use as required by this Chapter.
(i) Regional notification centers may not implement changes to their Board-approved procedures without prior approval from the Board. Any regional notification center may request a change to its procedures by submitting a formal request to the Board. Before voting on any change in procedures, the Board will allow for public comments from stakeholders.

§ 4607 – Process Requirements

Each regional notification center's Planning and Design Information Exchange must ensure the following:

(a) Allow Designers or Project Owners to submit Design Requests electronically through the regional notification center's publicly available Online Portal.
(b) Collect all the information required by section 4608.
(c) Provide a copy of the Design Request to the person who submits it and notify all Operators who may have subsurface installations in the Project Area.
(d) The Online Portal must require that Designers or Project Owners submitting Design Requests affirm that they understand that the request does not fulfill any of the requirements of an excavator pursuant to any other applicable law or regulation, including Government Code sections 4216-4216.24. This affirmation must include a statement in plain, easily understandable language that submitting the Design Request and/or receiving a Design Response does not excuse the Designer or Project Owner, or an excavator, from obtaining an 811 excavation ticket.
(e) The Online Portal for Design Requests must include user verification language pursuant to section 4608(c) of this Chapter.
(f) For each Design Request received, each regional notification center must assign a unique identification number and create a distinct record that includes the following:
    (1) A copy of the Design Request, including the verification executed by the Designer or Project Owner.
    (2) The date and time the Designer or Project Owner submitted the Design Request.
    (3) The Design Response due date for the Operator.
    (4) A list of all Operators that the regional notification center identified as potentially having subsurface installations in the Project Area.
    (5) The date and time the regional notification center electronically sent the Design Request and Design Response due date to each Operator that may have subsurface installations in the Project Area.

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(6) The date and time the regional notification center received receipt confirmation from each Operator that may have subsurface installations in the Project Area.
(7) Records of any Design Response deadline extensions requested by Operators, including the date and time the extension request was sent to the Designer or Project Owner and the revised deadline requested.
(8) Records of any complaints or disputes regarding the Design Response submitted by the Designer or Project Owner to either the regional notification center or any Operator. These records must include copies of the complaints, the date and time the complaint was submitted, the Operator's response if any, and the date and time the response was submitted.
(9) Full copies of any revised Design Requests received by the regional notification center. Regional notification centers must keep the same records for revised Design Requests that they keep for standard Design Requests.

(g) The Planning and Design Information Exchange must include a complaint process that allows Designers or Project Owners to report late, incomplete, or insufficient Design Responses to the regional notification center, automatically forwards complaints to the relevant Operators, and tracks Operator responses to complaints and final issue resolutions. Regional notification centers must report all complaints received through this process to the Board.

(h) Regional notification centers must maintain the Planning and Design Information Exchange records pursuant to California Government section 4216.2(f) for a minimum of 3 years and must provide any record or records maintained in accordance with that subsection to the Board upon request.

(i) Allow Operators to notify the regional notification center of any requested extensions of the time to respond to a Design Request pursuant to section 4610 of this chapter.

(j) The Planning and Design Information Exchange must allow Designers or Project Owners to submit revised Design Requests and allow regional notification centers to send these revised Design Requests and due dates to Operators.

Article 3 – Designers or Project Owners

§ 4608 – Design Requests

Only Designers or Project Owners with Infrastructure Projects may submit Design Requests. Design Requests must meet the following requirements:

(a) Designers or Project Owners must submit Design Requests at least 60 working days prior to planned excavation. If the Designer or Project Owner's Design Request is responded to prior to the end of the 60 days, they (or the excavator working on the project) do not have to wait the full 60 days prior to submitting an excavation ticket.

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(b) Design Requests must include the following information:

(1) Geographic information sufficient to identify the location and boundaries of the project. This could include coordinates, street addresses, geographic information system data, and digital maps;
(2) Contact information, including name, telephone number, and e-mail address for the Designer or Project Owner;
(3) Description of the project such as residential, roadwork, commercial, or agriculture; and
(4) Expected construction start date.

(c) Design Requests must be verified under penalty of perjury, with a digital signature, by a project's Designer or Project Owner. The verification must state that the Design Request is being submitted by either the Designer or Project Owner, and that the information being requested will be used for project planning and design purposes only.
(d) A Designer or Project Owner must submit a revised Design Request if the Project Area included in the Design Request expands and additional information is requested.

## Article 4 – Operators

### § 4609 – General Obligations

(a) All Operators must cooperate with the regional notification centers and adhere to the Planning and Design Information Exchange requirements.
(b) An Operator in receipt of a submitted and verified Design Request may not withhold its Design Response to that Design Request on confidentiality grounds and may not make the provision of its Design Response conditional on the Designer or Project Owner's execution of a nondisclosure agreement or other contract or agreement.

### § 4610 – Design Response Timeline

(a) Within 30 working days of the receipt of a Design Request, every Operator that received the Design Request must provide a Design Response to the contact listed on the Design Request.
(b) An Operator may take 15 additional working days to provide a Design Response only if the Operator notifies the contact listed on the Design Request of the need for a 15-day extension prior to 30-working days after the receipt of a Design Request. The Operator must notify the regional notification center of the extension. The 15-day extension is added to the end of the original 30-working-day deadline, and the regional notification center shall update and track the revised Design Response due date.
(c) If an Operator and a Designer or Project Owner mutually agree to an alternative deadline beyond the standard Operator response timeline or extension, the Operator must

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notify the regional notification center of the mutually agreed upon revised deadline and provide confirmation of the mutual agreement.
(d) When requesting an alternative timeline beyond the 30-working day and extension response timeline, the Operator must provide the Designer or Project Owner with a disclaimer stating that the Designer or Project Owner has the option to either accept or negotiate a different timeline. The mutually agreed confirmation must include an electronic record of agreement from the Operator and Designer or Project Owner and be submitted to the regional notification center.
(e) Upon receiving mutual agreement confirmation, the regional notification center shall record the mutually agreed deadline as the revised Design Response due date for all parties involved.

§ 4611 – Design Response Content
(a) All Operators must provide the following in their Design Responses:
(1) A statement that the Operator does or does not have information regarding subsurface installations within the Project Area.
(2) The following disclaimer: "This Design Response constitutes Planning and Design Information pursuant to Government Code 4216.1(b). The provision of or receipt of this information does not relieve excavators or Operators from their obligations under any other provision of the Government Code, including Government Code sections 4216.2 and 4216.3."
(3) Current contact information, including at least a name and phone number the Designer or Project Owner can contact regarding questions about the Design Response.
(b) If an Operator has information regarding subsurface installations within the Project Area, the Operator must include in its Design Response either:
(1) All information in its possession regarding subsurface installations within the Project Area, provided electronically; or
(2) A subset of the records and information in its possession, provided that the information is of adequate scope and detail for the Designer or Project Owner to accurately identify the location of Operator's subsurface installations within the Project Area. This information must, at a minimum, include:
(A) Any relevant maps, engineering drawings, as-builts, and geographic information system data;
(B) Other specifications regarding the installation type.
(C) A disclaimer that only a subset of the information in the Operator's possession is being provided.

(D) The quality level of the subsurface installation in accordance with the most recently published edition of the American Society of Civil Engineers 38-22 standard (ASCE: Standard Guideline for Investigating and Documenting Existing Utilities). If the quality level of the subsurface installation is unknown, unverified, or was not previously established, the information must be designated as Quality Level D.

(c) For any maps that are provided in a Design Response, the Operator must include the date of the last known update to the map.

(d) Design Responses must be sent electronically.

§ 4612 – Notification of Design Response

All Operators must comply with the following notice and deadline requirements:

(a) Within two working days of receiving a Design Request, the Operator must electronically notify the regional notification center confirming receipt of the Design Request. If an Operator fails to provide confirmation within two working days, the regional notification center shall re-notify the Operator and Designer or Project Owner. If an Operator fails to respond to the Design Request within 30 working days, an extended deadline pursuant to 4610(b), or the mutually agreed upon timeline, the regional notification center shall deem the Design Response as non-compliant. Regional notification centers must report instances of non-compliance to the Board by the first of every month or the next working day if the first falls on a weekend or holiday.

(b) Operators must electronically notify the regional notification center of any requested extension or agreed upon alternative timeline pursuant to 4610, including the revised Design Response due date.

(c) Operators must electronically notify the regional notification center when a Design Response is sent to the Designer or Project Owner. This notification must be submitted within one working day of the Operator's Design Response submission.

Article 5 – Fees

§ 4613 – No Fees

No fee shall be charged, collected, or received for any activity governed by these regulations, including the submission of Design Requests or the provision of Design Responses.

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