



California Underground Safety Board

Re: Case No. N243261302

Solar Central, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern,

Solar Central, Inc. respectfully submits this response regarding the alleged violations arising from the November 20, 2024 incident at 64015 Appalachian Street, Desert Hot Springs, California.

First and foremost, Solar Central, Inc. takes underground utility safety seriously and regrets the incident involving damage to the gas service line during installation of an electrical grounding rod associated with a main service panel upgrade.

However, Solar Central, Inc. respectfully requests that the Board consider the full context and mitigating circumstances surrounding this matter.

The work being performed was extremely limited in scope and involved the installation of a single grounding rod using hand tools and a hammer, not trenching, grading, or large-scale excavation operations. At the time, Solar Central, Inc. mistakenly believed that installation of a supplemental grounding rod for code compliance did not constitute excavation activity requiring an 811 notification. The project is an existing single-family dwelling with an existing grounding rod in the vicinity of the grounding rod that was added. This was an error in interpretation, not an intentional disregard for safety regulations.

Importantly, the incident did not result in any injuries, fatalities, fire, evacuation, environmental release, or property damage beyond the punctured gas service line itself. Service interruption was minimal, and the utility owner was contacted promptly after discovery of the damage.

Solar Central, Inc. also respectfully requests consideration regarding the allegation related to failure to contact 911. Upon discovery of the gas odor in the vicinity of the grounding rod installation, the focus was placed on promptly notifying the gas utility emergency services, which responded immediately so the condition could be safely and efficiently addressed.



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At no point did Solar Central, Inc. attempt to conceal the incident or continue unsafe operations. Since the incident, Solar Central, Inc. has implemented additional formal procedures to ensure full compliance with DigAlert and underground utility notification requirements on all future projects, regardless of perceived excavation scope. The company has adopted a formal utility locating and DigAlert compliance policy and reinforced internal training and notification procedures for all personnel.

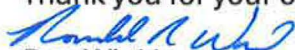
Solar Central, Inc. respectfully requests that the Board consider:

- The isolated and unintentional nature of the incident.
- The limited scope of the work performed.
- The absence of injuries or major consequences.
- The amount of liquid gas released was minimal with only a slight odor at the soil surrounding the grounding rod.
- The company's cooperation during the investigation.
- The immediate corrective actions implemented.
- The company's commitment to future compliance.
- The cost of the emergency repairs by the utility company were paid in full by Solar Central Inc upon receipt of the invoice.
- Supervisory management is taking the required safety board education course.

Solar Central, Inc. respectfully asks the Board to reduce or eliminate any penalties accordingly.

In addition to the above-mentioned steps, Solar Central Inc. is no longer installing solar systems. Solar Central has zero revenue. Our intention is to keep the license active and company operational only to monitor previously installed systems.

Thank you for your consideration,


Ron Winkle

Owner and CEO

Solar Central, Inc.



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