

**OFFICE OF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY
UNDERGROUND SAFETY BOARD**

**2026-2027
WORKPLAN**



**EVERY SAFE DIG BEGINS WITH 811—
BECAUSE WE'RE ALL CONNECTED UNDERGROUND**



For a hard copy of this report, please contact the California Underground Safety Board at the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety at (916) 902-6000.

The report may also be accessed on the Board's website:
<https://energysafety.ca.gov/what-we-do/underground-safety-board/annual-reports-plans/>

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ABOUT THE BOARD

The Underground Safety Board (Board) was created by the Dig Safe Act of 2016 to investigate accidents, develop excavation safety standards and coordinate education and outreach programs.

The Board is composed of nine members, seven of whom are appointed by the Governor and one each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee. The Board currently has three vacancies.



Bill Johns
Chair



Travis Clausen
Vice Chair



Amparo Muñoz



Marshall Johnson



Shant Simonian



Dave Sorem

MISSION

The California Underground Safety Board improves public and worker safety by facilitating communication and learning among excavators and the operators of subsurface installations, by investigating accidents to determine their causes, and by developing solutions to improve safety outcomes. The California Underground Safety Board strives to be a model regulatory and investigatory board for other states to emulate.

VISION

The California Underground Safety Board seeks to effect a California in which the state's excavators and subsurface installation owners know and understand

- how to identify the locations of subsurface installations,
- how to protect against dangerous contact with those installations, and
- how to resolve unexpected situations that may arise, and

in which the state's excavators and subsurface installation owners exercise that knowledge and understanding to promote a culture of mutual respect and dedication to the cause that everyone goes home safe.

VALUES

The actions and decisions of the Underground Safety Board members and staff will be guided and informed by their commitments to:



Respect for and attentiveness to the expression of differing backgrounds and perspectives of the board's members, the public, and stakeholders, as well as for the missions of excavators, operators of subsurface installations, and federal, state, and local agencies.



A culture of continuous learning based on the development and free exchange of safety information.



Inquiry into the facts of and context behind accidents, near misses, and latent safety-related conditions in the field.



Accessibility to the public and stakeholders, within the bounds of the law and ethical conduct.



Integrity in serving in the public interest and devotion to maintaining the public's trust.

WORKPLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Board reviews its past accomplishments and the needs and risks of the industries it regulates to formulate a set of objectives and activities for future. This report highlights these objectives and activities for 2026-2027.

GUIDING THEME

The guiding theme of the Board's work will be simple but powerful:

Every safe dig begins with 811— because we're all connected underground.

This theme reflects the reality that our safety, utility infrastructure, and communities are tied together beneath the surface. A single action can ripple across neighborhoods, utilities, and lives. By embedding 811 at the start of every project, we increase protection not only for the person digging but the entire interconnected system of utilities, such as gas, electric, telecommunications, and water networks, that serve California homes and businesses.

WHY A TWO-YEAR WORKPLAN

Beginning in 2026, the Board is shifting from an annual to a two-year workplan. This change provides stakeholders with a longer planning horizon, creates continuity across complex multi-year initiatives, and ensures alignment with the 2025 Dig Safe Act amendments in Senate Bill 254 (2025-2026) (SB 254), such as the requirement to adopt planning and design regulations by July 1, 2027.

This workplan covers the period January 2026 through December 2027. It highlights ongoing projects carried over from 2025, introduces new regulatory obligations, and outlines opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Excavation safety is not the responsibility of a single group; it is a shared responsibility. California’s underground infrastructure is interconnected, and so are the duties of those who install, operate, and dig around it. The Legislature has made it clear, through successive updates to Government Code 4216 and related statutes, that every stakeholder has a defined role in protecting the public. The Board’s responsibility as a regulator is to support this system with education, oversight, and accountability and to enforce each party’s responsibilities under the law.

*Every stakeholder has
a defined role in
protecting the public*

Utility Operators

Utility Operators carry the critical responsibility of knowing where their assets are located underground. Historically, incomplete records and abandoned lines without adequate documentation created significant risks. Recognizing this, the Legislature acted:

2016 Dig Safe Act

Reinforced the requirement that all utilities in the ground must be marked prior to excavation. Included the requirement that abandoned facilities must also be marked, using the symbol “A” in a circle.

January 1, 2023

New subsurface installations must be captured in Geographic Information System (GIS) format to improve records accuracy.

SB 254 (2025-2026)

Requires operators to provide facility information to help others plan and design excavation work safely.

Taken together, these actions deliver a clear message: utilities must have accurate, accessible records. The era of uncertainty about underground assets must end and the Board will continue to support utility operators through education and guidance but also expects compliance as a matter of public safety.

Excavators

Excavators are required to comply with the Dig Safe Act and use the 811 system every time they break ground. Beyond contacting 811, they are responsible for training their crews to dig carefully around facilities and seek clarification when needed. Legislative direction has been explicit:

Established legal requirements for excavation notification and damage reporting.	January 1, 2025 Revised excavator duties, including ticket creation and damage notification, and clarified compliance obligations.	SB 254 (2025-2026) Will standardize procedures and timelines for planning and design information sharing.
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Excavators must not only use 811 but also apply professional judgment and proper training in the field. Safety depends on ensuring that everyone on every crew understands how to interpret markings and proceed with care.

Regional Notification Centers

Regional Notification Centers (RNCs) play a vital role as the information conduit between excavators and operators. Their duty is to transmit information clearly, transparently, and equitably. Legislative actions reinforced this responsibility:

2016 Dig Safe Act Expanded the role of RNCs for coordinating safety communication and standardizing information management.	January 1, 2021 Support of automated communication systems with the requirement for operators to provide Electronic Positive Response.	SB 254 (2025-2026) Requires RNCs to facilitate the exchange of planning and design information for infrastructure projects.
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These requirements underscore that RNCs are not advocates for one type of stakeholder but rather are facilitators for the industry as a whole. Their effectiveness lies in making information available in a manner that supports both compliance and safety.

The Board's Commitment

The Board will continue to regulate with fairness, transparency, and accountability. It is committed to educating stakeholders, facilitating forums where all voices can be heard, enforcing compliance through audits and regulatory oversight, and developing regulations to improve public and worker safety. The effectiveness of this system depends on each party fulfilling its role and sharing the responsibility to improve public and worker safety for Californians.



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2026 - 2027 WORKPLAN

For the 2026-2027 Workplan, the Board will continue to build upon past achievements and be proactive in evolving priorities with a focus on advancing awareness, strengthening safety culture, and acknowledging shared responsibilities across all stakeholders. Activities deferred due to resource or procedural dependencies are noted as “Looking Ahead.”

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



Annual Education and Outreach Meetings

The Annual Education and Outreach Meetings will build upon previous successes and lessons learned to increase participation and engagement. The meetings will focus on providing opportunities for the Board and excavation industry stakeholders to come together for a collaborative damage prevention learning experience where they can strengthen their safety culture knowledge and expand their networks by sharing insights, hearing about proven practices, and exploring emerging technologies.

Education Course Accessibility

In 2026 and 2027, Education Course sessions will continue throughout the state.

The Board’s self-paced online education course is available in English and Spanish and will provide broad accessibility to dig safe basics training. Staff will execute an outreach plan targeting excavator groups and utility operators to promote this training resource.

New Educational Toolkits

The Board will continue its commitment to a culture of continuous learning based on the development and free exchange of safety information by expanding its educational toolkits to include new materials and enhancements to existing materials in a variety of formats to reach targeted groups of stakeholders. Staff will use lessons learned from underground damage investigations, new laws and regulations, and industry feedback to provide accurate, accessible materials that promote awareness, compliance, and best practices.

Framework for Coordinated State Education and Outreach

Building on stakeholder feedback that emphasized the importance of statewide coordination in education and outreach efforts and findings from a 2024 study that staff conducted on industry training in 2024, the Board facilitated four Coordinated Statewide Education and Outreach Workshops in 2025. Based on the collaborative insights and recommendations gathered at those workshops, staff will draft a project plan to develop content and implement awareness campaigns that enhance statewide education and outreach effectiveness. The Board will facilitate additional workshops in 2026 to get stakeholder feedback on the content for the awareness campaigns to launch in 2027.

Youth Education Program

To expand public awareness and foster a culture of safety awareness among future workers, the Board intends to develop and launch a pilot curriculum for schools and relevant vocational training programs by 2027.

SB 254 Education Obligations

Board staff will develop and deliver statewide outreach materials and awareness campaigns specifically addressing planning and design public engagement opportunities and new responsibilities to support the Board's work to draft and adopt regulations by July 1, 2027.



POLICY AND REGULATION

Safety Standards Development

Continuing the work done in 2025, the Board will advance potholing and unmarked line standards by integrating stakeholder feedback and adopt final standards in 2027.

GIS Mapping Law Clarification

Building on public comments received on the draft GIS regulations during fall 2025, the Board will continue to engage with stakeholders to define “new subsurface installation” and adopt regulations to promote uniform operator compliance.

Area of Notification and Membership Termination

In 2025, the Board approved submitting a rule making package to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). The proposed regulations that govern the requirements for members to keep their area of notification updated, as well as RNC membership termination, and the transfer of operator membership responsibilities. Staff will submit the package in early 2026, anticipating approved regulations by the end of the year.



Electronic Positive Response (EPR)

Upon finalizing a list of EPR codes that are in alignment with the law and provide clarity among operators and excavators, the Board will explore ideas for implementing two-way EPR communication and promote adoption by all operators.

Fee Regulation

The Board will revise the fee regulation to align with increased expenses and to address invoicing issues for terminated memberships.

Senate Bill (SB) 254 (2025-2026) Regulatory Mandates

Signed by Governor Newsom on September 19, 2025, SB 254 mandates the Board to issue regulations that require all operators to participate in a planning and design information exchange. This information exchange has the potential to avoid costly redesigns during the construction phase. To implement the requirements of SB 254, the Board will work on the following:

- Planning and Design Notification Regulations: Draft and adopt regulations covering timelines, standard processes, types and format of information and any other requirements needed for implementation of the data exchange, by July 1, 2027.
- Excess Volume Excavation Notifications: Draft and adopt regulations covering per-day ticket limitations by July 1, 2027.
- Regional Notification Center Procedures: Establish procedures for Underground Service Alert of Northern California and Nevada and Underground Service Alert of Southern California to submit their P&D information exchange and excess ticket volume procedures for stakeholder review and Board approval.
- Legislative Reporting: As part of the annual report due to the Legislature by February 1 of each year, report on the feasibility and potential funding of a statewide web-based planning and design communication platform that also allows tribes to have access to project plans.

INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement Audits

Over the next two years, the Board will implement standardized quarterly audits focused on electronic positive response practices in order to strengthen compliance and improve communication between operators and excavators regarding the location of subsurface installations. These audits will assess most non-compliant operator's adherence to the response requirements to promote timely, accurate information exchange. By conducting regular audits, the Board aims to support safer excavation practices, reduce risks to underground infrastructure, and reinforce accountability across all stakeholders.

"No-811" Pilot Program

Per Common Ground Alliance, excavating without contacting 811 is the leading cause of utility damages statewide. To improve excavator compliance with contacting 811 prior to digging, the Board partnered with two operators to launch a No-811 pilot program. The Board will expand the pilot program to additional operators with the goal of launching the initiative statewide.

Damage Notification Process Improvements

The Board will continue to review damage reporting practices, leveraging findings from the No-811 pilot program to develop recommendations to modernize reporting regulations and enhance investigation readiness.

SB 254 Compliance Oversight

The Board will develop procedures to monitor compliance with the new requirements in Government Code section 4216.1.



GOVERNANCE AND BOARD OPERATIONS

New Board Member Orientation Program

The Board currently has three vacancies. Board staff will finalize and deliver orientation for all new members.

Staff Development

The Governor's 2025-26 budget provided funds for several new staff positions for the Board. To ensure new and existing staff understand and stay up to date on the Dig Safe Act and new regulatory frameworks, management will ensure training and other opportunities are provided on a continual basis.

Stakeholder Engagement

To produce standards and regulations aligned with the law, and allow for practical implementation, the Board will engage with stakeholders by expanding structured feedback opportunities. Through workshops, advisory groups, and public comment periods stakeholders with diverse perspectives will have meaningful avenues to contribute, in shaping policies.



TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

TIMELINE

2026



FIRST QUARTER

- Conduct quarterly EPR audit.
- Provide training to Board members and staff as needed for onboarding or required for changes to the law.
- Planning and Design Workshop: Data Requirements and Format Standards.
- Planning and Design Workshop: Standard Processes and Ticket Procedures.
- Planning and Design Survey: Timeline for Information Exchange.



SECOND QUARTER

- Conduct quarterly EPR audit.
- Provide training to Board members and staff as needed for onboarding or required for changes to the law.



THIRD QUARTER

- Conduct quarterly EPR audit.
- Provide training to Board members and staff as needed for onboarding or required for changes to the law.



FOURTH QUARTER

- Conduct quarterly EPR audit.
- Provide training to Board members and staff as needed for onboarding or required for changes to the law.
- Present No-811 Pilot Program result and recommendation to the Board regarding launching statewide.

MILESTONES



Administer public comment period for Fee Regulation.



Draft regulations for planning and design, and ticket volumes.



Conduct stakeholder engagement on draft planning and design and GIS regulations.



Adopt Area of Notification and Membership Termination Regulations.



Hold first youth education pilot workshops.

MILESTONES

2027

MILESTONES

- Deliver annual report to the Governor and Legislature that includes a section on the development of a statewide web-based platform for planning and design information exchange system by February 1.
- Approve RNC planning and design information exchange implementation procedures by July 1.
- Adopt planning and design notification and ticket volume regulations by July 1.
- Conduct stakeholder engagement on draft potholing and unmarked lines standards.
- Adopt Fee Regulation.
- Publish final potholing and unmarked lines safety standards.
- Submit GIS rulemaking package to the Office of Administrative Law.

Looking Ahead (Post 2027)

The Board will evaluate if the two-year planning model strengthens stakeholder engagement, improves efficiency, and supports continuity across multi-year initiatives. Insights from feedback and performance results will guide future planning.

2026 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

February 9-10	April 13-14	July 13-14	September 14-15	November 9-10
Business Meeting	Business Meeting	Business Meeting	Education and Outreach Meeting	Business Meeting

2027 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

February 8-9	April 12-13	July 12-13	September 13-14	November 8-9
Business Meeting	Business Meeting	Business Meeting	Education and Outreach Meeting	Business Meeting

Board Meeting dates are subject to change.



Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
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