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## California Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board

July 11-12, 2022

Agenda Item No. 15 Information Item – Staff Report

*Planning Ticket – Survey II and Outreach*

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### **PRESENTERS**

Brittney Branaman, Assistant Executive Officer for Education & Enforcement

### **SUMMARY**

Board Member Johns and staff led a workshop in February of this year to gather information from operators and project planners and designers on the current process for obtaining facility information during project planning phases. Following the workshop, Board staff released surveys for both operators and designers to gather information on what underground facility information they would be able to provide and they would like to receive in the planning phase of building projects, the challenges or obstacles project planners and designers currently face in obtaining this information, and the corresponding challenges or obstacles operators currently face in providing detailed information to project planners and designers. Workshop and survey discussion participation was limited. To obtain the necessary information from those who would be affected by a planning ticket, staff has worked with the planning committee and created revised, online, surveys which it expects to release on July 7 and close on July 21. In anticipation of release of these surveys, staff has conducted outreach to key stakeholder groups to increase their awareness of and seek their engagement in the surveys. Staff recommends that the Board continue to conduct outreach to stakeholders to generate more responses and to inform potential development of a planning ticket through new surveys and an outreach plan to reach more designers and operators.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

2021 Strategic Plan Objective: Improve Excavation and Location Practice Safety

Strategic Activity: Looking Ahead: Locator Requirements and Best Practices

### **BACKGROUND**

During the Board's May 2021 meeting, Executive Officer Tony Marino discussed comments made by James Wingate, Executive Director of USA North 811 (USAN) regarding complaints from both excavators and operators pertaining to perceived delays in the locate and mark

process.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wingate outlined in writing his perspective of issues in the locate and mark process, which expressed an opinion that one of the potential delays or stresses is caused by engineers and project designers creating “new” excavation tickets for planning and design purposes when the associated excavation is not planned to occur until weeks or months later.<sup>2</sup>

### **Data is Limited**

As noted in the July 2021 staff report on issues with locate and mark,<sup>3</sup> data supporting how a planning and design ticket process will alleviate locate workload strain is limited. After the July Board meeting, the Board created a committee of Members Bianchini and Charland to examine how locate requests and electronic positive response notifications affect locator workload and possibly cause delays in the locate and mark process. To examine how locate requests and notifications affects locator workload, staff used ticket data from DigAlert, USA North 811, and Calaveras County Water District to simulate locator workload. Simulations demonstrated that even a relatively small percentage of excavators requesting a start date later than the legal minimum can dramatically reduce workload volatility at a system-wide level.<sup>4</sup>

The Board discussed during the July 2021 meeting whether it was reasonable to assert that a planning and design ticket process would improve locate response times while also potentially improving safety, and if so, what would such a process look like. The Board considered possible solutions for addressing planning and design ticket needs, including operators sharing as-builts and maps with designers and communication between designers and operators during the design phase of construction. The Board also discussed whether aspects of the Colorado 811 planning ticket process may be worth adopting in California.

During the Board meeting in November 2021, staff compared and contrasted California’s 811 ticket process to Colorado’s 811 engineer or planning ticket.<sup>5</sup> While Colorado 811 requires the designer to share design information during the design phase of building projects with operators via the call centers, California has no requirements in the one-call law for designers and operators to share information or communicate during the planning and design phase of building projects via the one-call centers. While not mandated to, both call centers have created an option for designers to look up utility contacts for design purposes through their respective websites. In California, designers must contact the operators themselves to request underground utility information.

Review of Colorado’s engineering ticket<sup>6</sup> found it requires communication between designer and operator in the design phase. It also implements several of the concepts later highlighted within the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Next Practices Report, including having accurate information of underground utilities to assist in efficiently locating and marking underground

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<sup>1</sup> [May 11, 2021, Agenda Item No. 9 USAN Issues in Locate and Mark](#)

<sup>2</sup> [July 13, 2021, Agenda Item No. 8B, USAN Report Issues Identified in Locate and Mark](#)

<sup>3</sup> [July 13, 2021, Agenda Item No. 8, Discussion on Locate and Mark Issues](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Board Meeting November 9, 2021, Agenda Item #7](#)

<sup>5</sup> [November 9, 2021, Agenda Item No. 6, Comparing & Contrasting CO](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Colorado 811 Statutes §103](#)

utilities to prevent locate and mark delays, as well as prevent damages to underground utilities. The Colorado engineering ticket also implements the CGA recommendation of a flexible ticketing process to help locators manage workloads and accommodate influxes of tickets.<sup>7</sup> Board Members agreed to consider the benefits of creating a new ticket type.

On February 28 the Board held a Planning Ticket Workshop virtually and released surveys for both designers and operators on the Board website. Though approximately 80 people were in attendance, discussion from participants was limited. Survey participation only garnered one response. The purpose of the workshop was to understand how designers<sup>8</sup> develop their design plans to avoid contact with underground utilities during excavation, understand how operators respond to requests from designers, and what the information sharing, and communication challenges are under the current ticket process in 811, so that the Board can use this information to evaluate creating a planning ticket. Overall, workshop discussion and survey feedback found that designers need information in the design phase and that having precise location of utilities early helps them identify challenges to the excavation before construction begins. Challenges discussed by designers included not being able to communicate with operators and not having access to maps of utilities to help inform their design plans. Operators discussed challenges as not having resources to process design requests and not having updated records of their utilities.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff propose to continue to collect information about the design process and the creation and implementation of a design ticket option.

### **July 7-21 Survey for Designers and Operators**

Because the previous surveys only garnered one response, new surveys will be released online on July 7 and will run for two weeks, closing on July 21. Staff reviewed the previous surveys released to designers and operators and considered ways in which the new surveys could be redesigned to be more “user friendly” and thus solicit more responses. Drawing on inspiration from the second survey on abandoned lines, and other survey and research methods, staff created more user-friendly multiple-choice surveys for designers and operators that will take less time for respondents to complete, thus reducing the barrier to participation and resulting in more responses.

These revised surveys will also target local planning agencies to learn about how these entities—which oversee much of the local permitting and approvals within their jurisdictions as part of their local control oversight—accept, use, and retain underground facility information for their planning review and oversight of construction projects. Staff plan to provide an analysis of the survey responses at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Board staff created an outreach plan to drive more participation from designers and operators,

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<sup>7</sup> [Common Ground Alliance NEXT Practices Report February 2021](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Designer Architect Defined, Business and Professions Code §§ 5500-5500.1](#)

which includes reaching out to the following local agency associations:

- League of CA Cities
- California State Association of Counties
- County Engineers Association of California
- Municipal Management Association of Northern California
- Municipal Management Association of Southern California
- CA Special Districts Association

### **Other States Research**

Currently staff is researching states other than Colorado—which had been analyzed in a November 2021 staff report—that have design ticket options to determine how they have implemented planning ticket requirements and any issues they encountered during implementation of any such requirements.

Staff expects to reach out to the State of Colorado Underground Damage Prevention Safety Commission to hear about their successes and lessons learned in implementing engineering (their equivalent of a planning ticket) and subsurface utility engineering ticket (SUE). This information will assist the Board in analyzing how to move forward with creating a new design ticket option. Staff also expect to reach out to the state of Virginia and are in the process of determining other states to contact. Staff expects to include an analysis of the information gathered from these discussions with other states in a future staff report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Outreach to designers and operators in addition to local planning agencies is needed to ensure participation in the surveys targeting these groups which staff plans expects to release in July. Staff requests that members of the public and the Board actively encourage participation and reach out to drive participation in the surveys.