California Regulation for Mapping Underground Utilities Using GIS and GPS Technology

Brett.clarke@csdsinc.com

1. Purpose and Scope

This regulation establishes requirements for utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to accurately locate, map, and document underground utilities in California. It applies to utility operators, construction companies, surveyors, and municipalities involved in the installation, maintenance, or excavation near underground utility infrastructure.

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2. Definitions

- **Underground Utilities**: Includes but is not limited to pipelines, cables, conduits, fiber optics, and sewer or water lines located below ground level.
- **GIS Technology**: A system designed to capture, store, analyze, and manage spatial and geographic data for mapping utilities.
- **GPS Technology**: Satellite-based navigation systems used to determine precise geospatial coordinates of underground utilities.
- **Utility Mapping Database**: A centralized, digital repository where GIS and GPS data of underground utilities are stored, maintained, and shared.

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3. Requirements

3.1 Data Collection Standards

- All utility mapping must use GPS receivers capable of achieving sub-meter accuracy to ensure precise location data.
- Utilities must be mapped with attributes including depth, material type, diameter (if applicable), and installation date.
- Contractors and operators must collect data in standardized formats compatible with GIS platforms.

3.2 Mapping Protocols

- Utility operators must document newly installed or relocated underground infrastructure using GPS and GIS technologies within 30 days of project completion.

3.3 Data Integration

- GIS data must integrate with California's Underground Service Alert system (“Call Before You Dig”/811) to provide accurate mapping for pre-excavation planning.

- Data formats must be compatible with state and federal geographic data standards, such as FGDC (Federal Geographic Data Committee) standards.

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4. Access and Sharing

4.1 Public and Private Access

- Utility mapping data must be accessible to municipalities, emergency services, and licensed contractors for planning and emergency response.
- Sensitive data (e.g., for security-critical utilities) must be restricted, with access granted through secure portals.

4.2 Updates and Maintenance

- Utility operators are required to update GIS databases every 6 months with new data to ensure accuracy.
- Regular audits must be conducted to verify data integrity and identify any discrepancies.
- Automated auditing withing the GIS program can detect discrepancies between GIS data and as-built conditions.
- Periodic re-surveys of utility data in areas prone to environmental changes or urban development

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5. Training and Certification

- All personnel collecting or managing GIS and GPS data for underground utilities must complete state-approved training on geospatial data collection and utility mapping standards.
- Certification programs will be developed to ensure consistent skills and methodologies.

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6. Compliance, Penalties, and Maintenance

- Non-compliance resulting in damage to underground utilities will result in liability for all damages, delays, and associated costs.

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8. Enforcement

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will oversee enforcement, auditing, and implementation of this regulation, coordinating with local governments as necessary.

Additional Considerations

Based on the document, here are additional considerations that could enhance the approach to mapping underground utilities using GIS and GPS technologies:

Advanced Technology Integration

- **LiDAR and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR):** Incorporating LiDAR and GPR alongside GPS can improve the accuracy of locating non-metallic utilities or utilities in difficult-to-access areas.
- **Drone Integration:** For large-scale projects or inaccessible terrains, drones equipped with GPS and imaging technologies can provide supplemental data.
- **3D Utility Models:** Expanding GIS capabilities to include 3D mapping for better visualization of utility networks, especially in complex urban environments.

Data Quality and Standards

- **Accuracy Metrics:** Clarify acceptable error tolerances beyond sub-meter/foot accuracy, especially for critical utilities.
- **Virtual Reference Station (VRS):** Require VRS or dual GPS systems to ensure continuous data accuracy in areas with poor satellite visibility.
- **Metadata Requirements:** Ensure that collected data includes detailed metadata, such as the equipment used, conditions during data collection, and timestamp information.

Real-Time Updates and Interoperability

- **Dynamic Updates:** Consider the feasibility of real-time or near-real-time updates to GIS databases for ongoing projects, reducing data lag.
- **API Integration:** Mandate APIs for seamless integration with other systems like asset management tools, construction planning software, or municipal databases.

Accessibility and Data Sharing

- **Role-Based Access:** Define more granular roles for data access, ensuring sensitive data can be viewed only by authorized users while maintaining ease of access for field workers.
- **Mobile Application Support:** Ensure GIS data is easily accessible via mobile platforms for field use, particularly during excavation or maintenance activities.

Risk Management and Emergency Planning

- **Risk Prioritization Models:** Use GIS to identify high-risk zones based on utility density, historical incidents, or geohazards. Augmenting with LRS can allow for more advanced risk assessment along linear infrastructure.
- **Scenario Planning:** Include simulation capabilities within GIS to assess impacts of potential utility failures, aiding in emergency planning.

Training and Certification

- **Advanced Certification Levels:** Develop specialized training modules for emerging technologies like LiDAR, GPR, and 3D GIS.
- **Continuous Learning:** Encourage ongoing education programs to keep teams updated on technological advancements and regulatory changes.

Compliance and Maintenance

- **Auditing Tools:** Integrate automated auditing within GIS platforms to detect discrepancies between GIS data and as-built conditions.
- **Periodic Re-Surveying:** Mandate periodic re-surveys of utility data in areas prone to environmental changes or urban development.

Implementation Support

- **Funding for Smaller Entities:** Provide guidelines or grant opportunities for smaller municipalities or utilities to adopt GIS/GPS solutions.
- **Phased Implementation:** Allow flexibility in compliance timelines for regions with limited resources or unique challenges.

Closing

This draft reflects the importance of combining modern geospatial technologies to ensure accuracy, safety, and efficiency in utility mapping by considering these points, the approach can further improve safety, efficiency, and long-term usability in the management of underground utilities. Let me know if you'd like to delve deeper into any specific area.

Let me know if you'd like specific refinements or additions!