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## California Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board

July 14-15, 2025

### Agenda Item No. 29 (Information Item) – Staff Report

*Coordinated Statewide Education and Outreach Workshops Update*

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#### **PRESENTER**

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#### **SUMMARY**

The Board's Education and Outreach Committee (E&O Committee) heard feedback from stakeholders that there is value in statewide coordination of education and outreach efforts and is conducting a series of workshops to collaboratively identify safety concerns and inform the development of a strategic plan to enhance statewide education and outreach effectiveness. This report summarizes findings from the May 2, 2025, workshop and outlines participant feedback, data presentations, and proposed next steps.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

2020 Strategic Plan Objective: Improve Compliance by Reaching Parties in Effective Ways

Strategic Activity: Establish a Framework for Coordinated State Education and Outreach

#### **BACKGROUND**

Government Code section 4216.12(b)(1) <sup>1</sup> requires the Board to coordinate education and outreach activities that encourage safe excavation practices.

At the Board's 2023 Education and Outreach meeting<sup>2</sup>, the Board determined a need for coordinated education and outreach. As part of the 2024 Workplan<sup>3</sup>, staff conducted interviews with industry stakeholders to gain insight into their education and outreach programs and to analyze evaluation techniques and effectiveness. At the Board's 2024 Education and Outreach meeting, Staff presented the research findings and recommended that staff conduct a series of workshops with stakeholders to better understand training issues from different perspectives in the call-before-you-dig process<sup>4</sup>.

Staff identified three goals for the workshops. The first is to engage stakeholders and

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<sup>1</sup> [Gov. Code § 4216.12 \(b\)\(1\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Notice and agenda for the September 11, 2023 Annual Education and Outreach Meeting](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Underground Safety Board 2024 Workplan](#)

<sup>4</sup> [September 4, 2024, Annual Education and Outreach Meeting, Item 8: Framework for Coordinated State Education and Outreach](#)

understand training issues from all perspectives in the call-before-you-dig process. The second goal is for stakeholders to collaboratively develop education and outreach training based on the collected information and create an action plan to implement the training. The final goal is for stakeholders to establish the appropriate metrics to evaluate the success of the training.

Part of the Board's 2025 Workplan is to Establish a Framework for Coordinated State Education and Outreach. To meet the goals of the workshops, the E&O Committee is facilitating opportunities for excavators and operators to come together, share insights, and foster long-term collaboration.

Each workshop builds upon the information gathered from the prior workshops, so each workshop's focus depends on the progress and results of the previous workshop(s). During the first two workshops, held in January and February 2025, the E&O Committee heard participants' concerns regarding excavation safety training, which resulted in these key findings:

- Workshop attendees selected the underground infrastructure damage root cause "Failure to Notify 811" as the focus of discussions for the 2025 Coordinated Statewide Education and Outreach workshops.
- Participants asked the Board to develop safety training materials related to "Failure to Notify 811".
- Participants stated that they would use and distribute those materials in their own outreach and safety training efforts to improve awareness of the 811 process.

#### **MAY 2, 2025, WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**

This report summarizes information received from excavators, operators, and other stakeholders who participated in the May 2, 2025, Coordinated Statewide Education and Outreach workshop. This workshop was two-and-a-half hours long and engaged with stakeholders to focus on their experiences, knowledge, and data to collaboratively deepen the understanding of the reasons people failure to notify 811.

#### Outreach Summary

Staff utilized emails and social media to raise awareness for the event:

- Staff reached out to 56 associations to ask for their partnership in promoting the workshop and to invite association staff to attend.

The Workshop was also promoted through partners:

- The California Regional Common Ground Alliance (CARCGA) sent information about the workshop to their subscribers on April 25, 2025.
- Underground Service Alert of Southern California (DigAlert) sent information about the workshop to their subscribers on April 28, 2025.
- Underground Service Alert of Northern California & Nevada (USA North) sent information about the workshop to their subscribers on April 29, 2025.
- Staff provided an update and promoted the workshop at the USA North and DigAlert General Meetings in April 2025.

#### Teams Webinar Registration Summary

Registration for the workshop was not required but was available as an option through our Teams Webinar registration form. Those who registered for the workshop immediately received a confirmation email and also received a reminder email one hour before the start time of the workshop.

A total of 41 people opted to register for the workshop:

- 28 of those who registered were confirmed to have attended the workshop virtually.

While the source for all registrations was not collected, analyzing the registration dates and times shows that some registration was driven by Board and partner outreach efforts as follows:

- 7 people registered following the GovDelivery Bulletin notice and CARCGA email.
- 4 people registered following the DigAlert email.
- 7 people registered following the USA North email.
- 18 people registered after posts were published to Energy Safety social media accounts.

#### In-Person and Virtual Workshop Attendance and Engagement Summary

There was a total of 38 attendees at the workshop:

- 2 in-person attendees:
  - Every in-person attendee participated by providing comments or responding to comments.
- 36 virtual attendees<sup>5</sup>:
  - At least one online attendee participated in each topic of discussion.
  - Most online attendees stayed for 90% - 100% of the workshop.

Representatives from 811 notification centers, utility providers, construction firms, professional associations, government agencies, and municipalities across California attended.

Including both in-person and virtual attendees, the Utility Owners/Utility Operators stakeholder category had the largest representation; Professional Excavators, Locators, Engineer/Utility, and 811 Notification Center stakeholders had less than half the representation of Utility Owners/Utility Operators.

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<sup>5</sup> Virtual attendees: This value shows the number of unique logins, meaning the count reflects individual devices used to access the webinar. Some participants may have viewed the webinar as a group from a single computer or phone.

Stakeholder Category	Number of Attendees (includes both in-person and virtual)	Percent of Attendees
Utility Owner/Utility Operator	15	39%
Other/Unknown	11	29%
811 Notification Center	5	13%
Engineer/Utility Design	3	8%
Professional Association	2	5%
Locator	1	3%
Excavator	1	3%

### Workshop Discussion Items

#### *Workshop Activity: Root Cause Analysis – Failure to Notify 811*

The E&O Committee guided workshop attendees through a root cause analysis exercise using the “5 Whys” method to explore the core question: Why do people fail to notify 811?

Attendees provided the following reasons and insights as to why they think that people fail to notify 811:

- Homeowners (DIYers) have low awareness of the 811 process.
- People may fail to notify 811 because of the time it takes. It adds to their project timeline.
- People believe if they’re shallow digging/using hand tools, they aren't required to call 811/don’t need an 811 ticket.
- The general public associate markings with professional construction.
- People are concerned that the 811-ticket process isn’t easy. They are intimidated by it.
- Companies don’t have an internal communication process for their own projects.
- Subcontractors are not calling in their own 811 tickets. They believe existing marks will cover them.
- Contractors may fail to notify 811 because they may be unlicensed.

Attendees voted to focus on the following two insights for the second exercise in the root cause analysis:

- People believe they are exempt due to the depth or the tools they are using.
- Subcontractors aren’t calling in their own 811 tickets because they believe existing marks will cover them.

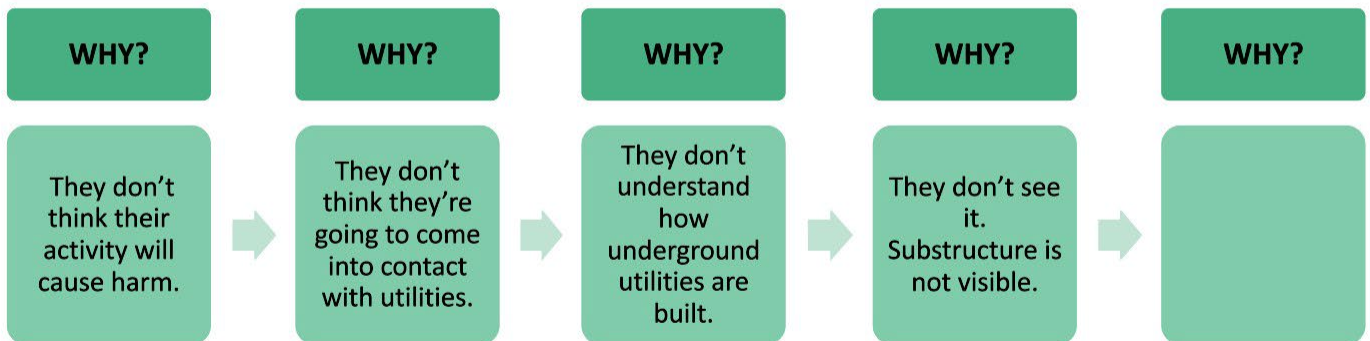
Attendees concluded: (1) People don’t understand how underground utilities are built and can’t see substructures, so they don’t see the connection between their work and how it may impact substructures, and (2) General contractors are responsible for enforcing the law, and they may not be enforcing it. (While participants came to this conclusion, a general contractor does not have the ability to enforce the law; a general contractor is responsible to ensure compliance and may be liable for noncompliance.)

#### ITEM 4: ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS – FAILURE TO NOTIFY 811

##### 5 WHYS TECHNIQUE #1

What we KNOW: Failure to notify 811 causes underground infrastructure damage

What we THINK: People believe they are exempt due to their depth and the tools that they are using.



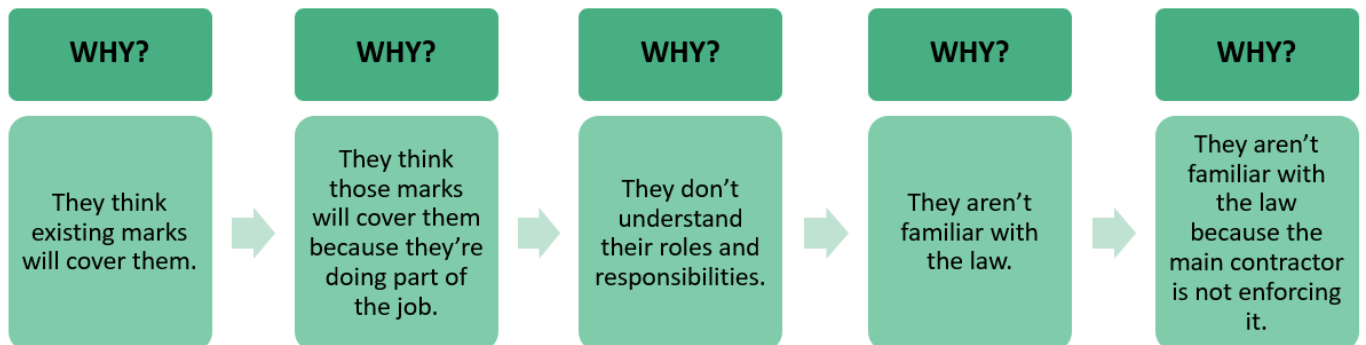
Identified root cause: People don't understand and can't see substructures, so they don't connect how their work may impact substructures.

#### ITEM 4: ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS – FAILURE TO NOTIFY 811

##### 5 WHYS TECHNIQUE #2

What we KNOW: Failure to notify 811 causes underground infrastructure damage

What we THINK: Subcontractors aren't calling in their own 811 tickets.



Identified root cause: The general contractor is responsible for enforcing the law and they may not be enforcing it.

### *Public Presentation of Industry Data*

The E&O Committee asked participants to present data focused on failure to notify 811 that addressed these questions:

- What data are you collecting and analyzing? What do incident reports, damage data, or call logs suggest is the cause of damage?
- What trends are you seeing? What does the data say about who's not calling 811—by region, group, role, or project type?
- How do you measure success today? Are you collecting data that tracks public understanding or behavior related to 811?
- What's missing in the data? Are there blind spots we need to fill in to better understand what's driving a failure to notify 811?

A representative from USA North presented data on damages, statistics, trends, and outreach efforts:

- Most of the existing damage reports come from individuals who have already followed the proper process by calling 811 and receiving a ticket. While it is required by law for excavators to have an 811 ticket and for excavation damages to be reported, there are instances where excavation work is done without a ticket and where damage is only reported directly to a utility or to 911. There is currently no formal mechanism for collecting data on “no call” damages from utility operators, although there is expressed interest in developing this capability.
- As of the current reporting period, there have been 2,588 damage notifications. The counties with the highest number of incidents are Santa Clara, Sacramento, and Fresno. The main types of work involved in these damages are utility-related, particularly those involving water and communication infrastructure.
- A significant number of “no call” damages are caused by homeowners and small contractors who are either unaware of the 811 system or choose not to follow it. Urban counties with high levels of construction activity and dense utility infrastructure—such as those in the Bay Area—experience more damage incidents due to the increased frequency of excavation.
- Damage data serves as the primary performance indicator for evaluating prevention efforts. However, accurately assessing success is challenging due to various influencing factors, such as tolerance zones around underground utilities. Outreach initiatives are closely tied to damage data, with counties reporting high numbers of incidents receiving targeted educational efforts.
- Currently, outreach is mostly reactive, triggered by damage reports, but there is a shift toward more proactive engagement, including local stakeholder meetings. The education team recently expanded from two to three members, enhancing their capacity to reach more communities. There are ongoing efforts to align the impact of outreach with damage trends, and post-outreach surveys are being used to measure effectiveness.
- There is a strong need for more detailed data on “no call” damages, including demographic information such as the size of excavation companies and homeowner involvement. This additional information would support more targeted and effective

outreach, ultimately reducing future incidents.

A representative from CARCGA presented information related to a panel discussion:

- Prior to the workshop, a CARCGA panel discussed damage data in general. Facility owners primarily respond to incident reports involving their infrastructure, while excavators tend to analyze their own damage incidents. The conversation included an examination of trends related to individuals or groups failing to call 811 before digging, broken down by region, group, role, and project type.
- In terms of regional trends, the majority of damage incidents are concentrated in metropolitan areas such as the Bay Area, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego. This is likely due to the higher volume of construction activity and population density in these regions.
- Regarding group and role trends, residential work performed by unlicensed excavators continues to pose significant challenges. On the professional side, subcontractors are frequently involved in incidents, indicating a potential gap in communication or oversight within the contracting chain.
- Project type also plays a major role in current damage trends. Two statewide initiatives—the expansion of fiber optic networks to improve high-speed internet access and the undergrounding of utility lines—are among the leading contributors to excavation-related damages. These projects often overlap in location and are ongoing throughout California.
- When it comes to measuring success, the panel found that few members have formalized systems in place. While some organizations track public awareness and behavioral changes through events and outreach efforts (such as those held during the Long Beach Grand Prix), these strategies vary widely. Notably, one Bay Area city links training to the issuance of new excavation permits as a preventative measure.
- Despite the available data on who causes damages and when and where they occur, there remains a critical gap in understanding why they happen. The panel emphasized the need for more comprehensive and relevant data collection to support meaningful analysis and targeted prevention efforts.

A representative from PG&E noted that they investigate all incidents in alignment with industry standards and stated that a consistent trend across regions is around 50% of damages result from excavators not calling 811 before excavation.

A representative from United Contractors (UCON) did not present data but noted that they would be speaking with the UCON Safety Committee to determine if they have data that could be shared.

#### *Public Presentation of Current Education and Outreach Materials*

The E&O Committee asked attendees to present their current education and outreach materials focused on these topics and questions:

- Engagement Timeline: At what points in the excavation process or project timeline does your education and outreach usually occur? Is your outreach reactive (after an incident) or proactive (before they dig)?
- Content Inventory Overview: Share examples of the types of materials you are currently

using in your education and outreach efforts (e.g., flyers, videos, social media, toolbox talks, webinars) and the key messages. Are those materials available for the public to access?

- Target Audiences: Who are you trying to reach, and how are you tailoring your content for different audiences? How are you measuring success?
- Curriculum Analysis: What is incomplete about your current curriculum that needs additional support?

Before public presentation of materials, the E&O Committee presented the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Excavation Damage Prevention Curriculum, which is free to access and available in both English and Spanish. This presentation was in response to feedback heard in previous workshops, where participants mentioned a need for training that is accessible, self-paced, and multilingual.

Attendees then presented their data, including representatives from USA North, PG&E, CARGCA, and UCON.

Types of content that are currently being used include:

- Printed materials: Excavation manuals, law handbooks (California Gov. Code 4216+), field guides, stickers, and homeowner pamphlets.
- Digital content: YouTube training videos (in English and Spanish), online courses, and webinars.
- In-person events: "Safe Events" in high-ticket/high-damage counties and customized presentations at contractor shops/yards.
- Email blasts: Alerts on system updates and law changes.
- Social media & media outreach: Active across LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok; advertisements in Farm Bureau publications and participation in large events like the World Ag Expo.

Multiple target audiences were also identified:

- Professional excavators
- Utility operators
- DIY homeowners
- Contractors (especially small contractors)
- General public

#### **MAY 2, 2025, COORDINATED STATEWIDE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH WORKSHOP KEY FINDINGS**

At the stakeholders' request, the Committee facilitated this opportunity for industry collaboration to address concerns regarding excavation safety training, which resulted in these key findings:

- There is a lack of awareness for responsibilities related to the Dig Safe Act (Government



Code section 4216+) and calling 811 across many different excavation industry audiences.

- While many stakeholders are collecting data and distributing educational and outreach materials, additional analysis and coordination of both could help further identify and address the reasons that people fail to notify 811.

#### **FINAL WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

The Board's E&O Committee held the final Coordinated Statewide Education and Outreach Workshop of 2025 in-person at the USA North office in Concord, with the option of attending online. E&O staff will present the final workshop findings at the Board's Education and Outreach meeting in September 2025.