



Paloma HS Gas Line

October 22, 2025

Underground Safety Board

Re: Paloma High School Gas line damage dated July 8, 2024

Dear Sirs and Madams,

Verne's Plumbing Inc. has been a licensed plumbing and pipeline contractor in the state of California since 1989. We have a very high regard for safety of our employees, the public and the surrounding areas. We have ongoing training and certification of all employees, and especially those in a supervisory position including "trenching and excavation safety and competent person", as well as we have always had a "trenching and excavation policy" in place. We are not here to deny that the gas line was hit by our employees nor the danger it presented but would like to show we put maximum effort in to ensure all laws and company policies are followed in the field. However, we cannot always be on all projects to ensure this is followed and instead rely on the training and expertise of the employees who we have trusted to run these projects. After the incident occurred Luis Yepez (Foreman) was relieved of his supervisory duties and reprimanded due to his lack of following safety procedures and company policies. In fact, all foremen including Luis Yepez had been in our office on June 21st, 2024, for an extensive refresher training on Trench and excavation safety and competent person certification (See in attached link).

After receiving the call that a gas line had been hit, the question was asked (is your dig alert ticket up to date and was the gas line marked) the response was he forgot to update, and the asphalt had been removed a couple days prior removing the markings. At this point His general foreman Robert Ecker updated the dig alert ticket and Luis was relieved of his position as soon as we could fill with another qualified employee.

We recently had a meeting with all managers and the people who were involved in the matter, to try and come up with fail-safe solutions to keep an incident like this from happening again. We decided to have a formal jobsite training on the importance of dig alert for all equipment operators as well as jobsite foremen and workers; to express the need to verify one is in place for their safety and well as the safety of others. This training included how to mark and open a dig alert ticket, how to verify proper marking that has been made by utility companies, and to call for a remark if marks are no longer visible and not to try and remember where they were.

Since this incident took place, we have taken several new precautions to try to prevent an incident such as this from happening again, constant reminders and refresher training. As well as we have added to our pre-task plan form for each day, a location to verify that a dig alert ticket is in place including the number and expiration date of the ticket. We have also had stickers and keychains for all excavation equipment asking, "is your dig alert ticket up to date, if not do not dig!" with the sticker place on the dash of the equipment in plain sight of the operator.



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Verne's Plumbing Inc. does not take this incident lightly and has done extensive training prior to this incident as well and retraining since this happened, as well and looked for and put into place new methods to try and prevent others from making the same mistakes made July 7, 2024. I have also included a link with all the documents from prior to the time of the incident to current with all the safety meetings, planning and new means put into effect to make our best efforts to mitigate this from happening again. We ask the board please look at our record and efforts to maintain a safe work environment for all employees and anyone else who could be affected by our safety.

Included in the link.

- 1- Company Trenching and excavation policy
- 2- Power point safety meeting including trench and excavation 6/21/24
- 3- Competent person certification class 6/21/24
- 4- Gas line damage report with pictures
- 5- Incident investigation report
- 6- Meeting to discuss severity of incident and ways to mitigate it happening again
- 7- Statements from all people involved both directly and indirectly
- 8- Reinforcement dig alert training for Foremen, operators and employees on the jobsite
- 9- New per task plan with added requirements (ie: dig alert ticket, number and expiration)
- 10- Equipment stickers, magnets and keychains as a constant reminder.

Thank you for your time in reviewing the measures we have taken both prior to the incident, and after trying to keep this type of incident from happening again.

Respectfully,

Lyle J. Ferguson
Vice President
Verne's Plumbing Inc.