

# PG&E 811 Safe Digging Webinar

Jason: Good morning. Thank you for joining PG&E'S 811 Safe Digging webinar. Today you'll have an opportunity to learn about the importance of calling 811 for any size project, no matter how large or small. You have an opportunity to ask questions of our expert panel. And with the instructions, if you're on a laptop and you wanna submit a question, select the Q&A on the right side of the screen, edit your name, type your question in the compose box, and then send. If you're on a mobile phone, select the question mark icon at the top of your screen and your name, type your question, and hit send. And with that, I'll turn it over to our main presenter, Dane Lobb to kick us off. -: Thanks Jason. Welcome to PG&E's Dig And Plant Safely webinar. My name is Dane Lobb. Did you know that every six minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811? The objective of this webinar is to understand the laws governing digging, the importance of calling 811 before you dig, following safe digging practices to avoid damaging underground utilities. And at the end of this webinar, we're gonna connect you with some resources that may be helpful in planning your next project. So California, we have a law for almost everything. California has a law 4216, which defines digging, which says any operation in which the earth, rock, or other material in the ground is moved, removed, or otherwise displaced meets the definition of digging. So what does that mean in practical terms? Whether you're moving a teaspoon of dirt to plant a flower bed or you're digging a trench, you've met the legal definition of digging, which means you need to get an 811 ticket. So before you start your next project, there's a few things we want you to think about. One of those is considering hiring a licensed contractor. The benefit of hiring a licensed contractor is they're insured, they understand the laws, and they're likely to finish the project in a timely fashion. And most importantly, they're familiar with the 811 process. So a couple of examples I'd like to share with you of the importance of planning your project would include thinking about what you plant and where you plant it. For example, we've all walked down a sidewalk and we've seen that the sidewalk is buckled. Typically that happens because a tree root has gotten under the sidewalk and lifted it up. So you might want to think about a tree at full maturity before you plant it in a specific location. What will that tree look like once it's fully mature and 30 or 40 feet tall? Will it obstruct the view of someone? So if you lived on a corner, you don't want it to obstruct the stop sign to avoid potential accidents, could create some challenges there for you. In the middle picture, I'd like to call your attention to the pad mount transformer. Both PG&E has these, other utilities use these, and these are locations where maintenance or upgrades are performed. So we need to have an offset. So if you don't like the view of this in your front yard, you wanna plant some plants around it, make sure that you first get your 811 ticket. And then when you do any planning, make sure it's meeting the right size of the plants and the right type of plants because we don't want them interfering with those utilities and we want you to have an offset. So let's talk about above ground. So when you're planning something overhead that may interfere with overhead utilities, we want you to think about that size of that tree. So you don't wanna plant things like a palm tree directly under an overhead electric line because there's no way of pruning it back and it's gonna continue to grow until it actually interacts with that overhead utility. That could be really dangerous. So one of the things we recommend is any trees that are gonna be taller than 25 feet, that you plant them at least 20 feet away. Anything that's gonna be 40 feet or taller, we want you to plant it at least 30 feet away. And anything that's going to grow above 40 feet, you want to plant it at least 40 feet

away. And remember, trees need to grow both above and below the ground. So choosing the right tree for the right location is important. We also want you to think, as I said, what's above and below the ground. So in many communities, we have underground utilities, so that could be your gas lines or your electric lines. So it's important that you don't plant anything that may interfere with that underground utility. And as I said previously, we've all seen where a sidewalk buckles up. The same thing can be true with an underground utility. If you plant a tree too close to an underground utility, it may actually move it up and place it in an unsafe condition. It's also really difficult if there's anyone who has to make any maintenance or upgrades to that to distinguish between the underground utility and a tree root. Take a look at this picture on the lower right, there's actually three different gas lines in this photograph and it be a real challenge for you to pick out which ones are the gas lines. So just to give you an idea of just how challenging that might be. So to avoid that challenge, what we're asking you to do is plant the right type of vegetation near these underground utilities. So that means everything within five feet of that underground line, we want you to have just grasses, small plants, anything that's five to 10 feet, you can start planting things that don't get any taller than four feet. And then beyond that, we don't want you to plant anything that's gonna be much greater than five to 10 feet tall. So remember whatever is above and below should be considered throughout your planning of your project. So let's talk about the five steps for safe digging. Step one, we're gonna ask you to survey and then mark the area in white where you plan to dig. Step two, we're gonna ask you to call 811 at least two working days prior to starting your work. And the day you call doesn't count. Step three, we're gonna ask that you wait until all of the utilities have come out and marked where their lines are. Step four, we want you to make sure that throughout the entire course of your project that the marks that were placed are still visible. And then step five, and the most important of all, is we want you to dig safely. And that means digging with hand tools anytime you're within two feet of those buried utilities. So step one, let's talk about how we mark that out. You can mark your area with any of the following materials. You can use white chalk, white flowers, white flags, or even baking flour. So how do you mark an area that you're planning on doing some type of work? So let's say you plant on putting a sprinkler system in your front yard and you wanna make sure that you call 811. How would you mark your front lawn? Well a good choice would be the middle where we see the four corners, you could simply put a bracket around the four corners of your front lawn where you plan on doing that sprinkler work. Let's say you're gonna remove a tree in your front yard like this first picture here. You could either take your white flower and just circle that tree all the way around or make a square around that tree. These are all important ways of marking. And remember, white chalk, white flags, or even baking flour work just fine. Step two, we're gonna want you to make that fast free call to 811 before your project. And remember, you gotta call at least two working days and your 811 ticket's gonna be valid for 28 days. That should be enough time to complete your project. You can also go online and apply for the 811 ticket as well. It's a fast five step free process. You can go there and learn all about it at 811, [www.california811.org](http://www.california811.org). So let's talk about that 811 ticket. There are a couple things that I wanna call your attention to that are important to remember. First, you wanna make note of that 811 ticket number. You can jot it down on a piece of paper and make sure you keep it handy in case you need to call 811 back and make any changes. The next thing I want you to think about is the legal start date. This is the line where you are permitted to begin your project. Remember I said at least two working days, we have to allow all the responding utilities the opportunity to come out and mark what utilities might be in conflict with the project that you're working on. So here's an example on this 811 ticket of all the different utilities

who are gonna be responding out that may have some buried utilities that could be in conflict with the work that this ticket is being performed on. Next, we wanna make sure for that step three, that all those utilities have come out and marked their facilities. So if you look on that right picture, you can see there are a lot of utilities that you may not be aware of that are underground. So if you ever walk through your neighborhood and seen paint on the ground and thought, what the heck? Well that's actually an indication of the location of an underground utility. So if you see a yellow mark on the ground, that indicates that there's underground gas line. If you see red, that's an indication of an underground electric line. If you see orange, that's an indication of an underground communication line, Something like AT&T or Packard Bell or Comcast, your cable. Water of course is marked blue. So why is that important? Well that's an indication that the utility has come out and actually marked for your 811 ticket. So we call that positive response. And the reason you wanna make sure that you get that positive response is you don't wanna begin your digging project until two things have happened. One, that the legal start date has arrived, and two, that you've received positive response from all the utilities. And that's gonna be both the marks and you're gonna get an email from them that says, hey, I've come out and I've marked where our underground utilities are located. So you'll see paint on the ground or flags, and you'll also get a positive response from the utility by email. So step five, and this is a big important one that we've talked about, is making sure that you're only using hand tools anytime you're within two feet of that mark on the ground. So you may imagine that the utility line is directly below the mark, not exactly. We call this the buffer zone. That utility line could be a little to the left or a little to the right of where that mark is placed on the ground. So you wanna make sure that you're carefully digging within two feet on either side and only digging with hand tools and digging very carefully while you're doing it. So there may be some occasions where you have to call 811 back, and that would be if you're digging and you can't find that underground utility that was marked on the ground, you'll wanna call 811 back and say, hey, I dug but I didn't find that utility. Can you send out the utilities to come and help me out here? If you find something that isn't marked, if you're digging around and suddenly you see this pipe in the ground and you're like, what the heck is this, well call 811 back. They'll have the utilities come out and help you with that. Another time you wanna call is if you should accidentally damage, and that means dent, gouge, groove, or break the line that you find, you'll want to go ahead and make that fast free call to 811. And then we all have the best intentions. I want to do this project and finish it this weekend, but my in-laws came over so I had to push that project out. If your project is gonna take longer than 28 days, call 811 back. You can have that ticket extended out beyond that 28 days. And then there's one other time I think is really important to note here is if those marks are no longer visible, so you're out there working and suddenly you had to pull that flag out and then you forgot where it was, hey, stop the project, call 811 back, the utilities will come back out. They'll place those flags again or place those marks that are not visible. Now we hope this never happens, but if you should accidentally hit a gas line, for example, we want you to stop your project. We want you to call 911, move to a safe location. Don't start your car, don't light a match. Don't operate any electrical equipment that may ignite the gas, and if it does catch on fire for whatever reason, don't try to put it out, step back, call 911, wait for the fire department and the police department to respond out. They know the appropriate steps to make you and your neighbors and your community safe. So if you do damage an underground utility, you could be held responsible for the cost of the repair of that damage. So it's really important that first you call 811 and next that you dig safely because as you can see, damaging underground gas line, the bill could start at around \$3,500 for the repair. Then as I promised, we have

some amazing resources for you. You can get a whole bunch of information by reaching out to underground service alert, that's for Northern California. It's the 811 process at [www.usanorth811.org](http://www.usanorth811.org). For Southern California you can contact [digalert.org](http://digalert.org). And then as always, you're welcome to reach out to PG&E. We have some amazing resources available for you at [www.pge.com/digsafely](http://www.pge.com/digsafely). And if you wanna check on the status of a contractor that you've hired to make sure that that license is valid and up to date, you can contact the contractor's state license board. And remember, it's really important to make that fast free call to 811 before you dig. As I said, we've got some amazing resources. If you've got your phone handy, take a screenshot of that QR code in the bottom and that'll take you directly to our damage prevention webpage where you can see some amazing videos on safe digging practices. I'd like to turn it back over to Jason for our Q&A session, Jason? Jason: Thank you Dane. As a reminder, for those of you who are joining this session live, I'll provide instructions for asking questions in just a moment. If you're watching a recording of this session on our [pge.com/811](http://pge.com/811) website, you can submit your questions to [damageprevention@pge.com](mailto:damageprevention@pge.com). Again, that's [damageprevention@pge.com](mailto:damageprevention@pge.com). And a member of our damage prevention team will get back to you promptly with an answer to your question. Now if you are joining us live today, if you're on a laptop, select the Q&A on the right side of the screen and your name or not, type your question in the compose box and hit send. You're on a mobile phone, select question mark icon at the top of your screen, enter your name or not. Type your question, hit send. And with that, I'm launching the questions that we've received to this date. First one, I'm replacing repairing a fence. We'll be putting the posts back where they were before. Do I need to call 811? -: Great question. Thank you Jason. This is one of the most common times that someone damages an underground utility is doing fence work. We may imagine that there was already a fence post there, what's the big deal? What may have occurred is that gas or underground utility line may have been just beneath where that fence post was. And now when you take that post hole digger and you start digging, you may encounter it. Also, things change over time. When that fence was first put up, maybe 10 years ago, there wasn't a utility line there, but a utility line has been placed in the interim. So it's always, not only is it the law and it's a fast and free call, it's important that you dig safely at all times and to make sure that you don't damage any underground utilities. Aaron, is there anything you want to add? Aaron: Hi everyone. My name is Aaron Lynn. I supervise a group of folks who actually have to respond out when these diggings occur to PG&E facilities. And as Dane mentioned, fence work happens to be one of our number one types of incidents that are causing damages. So this is a real kind of nice reminder that if you're replacing something that's already existing, as Dane mentioned, that gas line, electric line or another utility might have already been there before the fence that you're replacing was put up. So unfortunately, a lot of folks don't call 811 when they're replacing a fence, but if you do, highly recommend that you do. You'll get an opportunity to see if there is a utility that's in conflict with that fence. If you do have a marked facility there that's close to the post you're replacing, we ask you to dig safely, be able to remove the old post and then this gives you an opportunity to kind of design where you want to put the new posts in. So really good topic here, great question, but yeah, unfortunately fence work happens to be our number one type of incident causing damages. -: Thanks Aaron. Jason: Thanks Aaron. Next question, what about basic gardening like planting flowers and succulents? -: There's a common misperception about how deep you dig. Some people think, oh, I don't need to get an 811 ticket, I'm only going down a foot or so. But the law is very specific. It says anytime you move any dirt or remove any dirt, you're required to call 811, that meets the legal definition of digging. So as I said in the beginning, you may only be moving a teaspoon of dirt,

you've met the legal definition of digging, which means an 811 ticket would be required. It's also really an important thing to know exactly where those utility lines are located. Your home may have been built in the 50s, 60s, 70s, and over time maybe some roots got under it and migrated that utility line up. So it might be very shallow. So you may assume that it's way too deep or deeper than a foot. In actuality it might be just below the surface. So it's always important to make sure that you get that 811 ticket before you begin any digging project, big or small. Jason: Thank you, Dane. Next question. How can I remove tree roots safely given that they may extend past the project area to be marked? -: Wow, this is probably one of the biggest challenges. One of the things we suggested is anytime that you're gonna be having a utility that might be close to a fully mature tree is the time you might want to consider bringing in that licensed contractor. They're professionals and they're accustomed to dealing with this specific challenge and they have the tools and technology and abilities to safely remove that tree without damaging a underground utility. There are times that it may be important to work with the utility in order to safely remove that tree because it's not uncommon for the tree roots to actually be completely around it. So if you make that fast free call to 811 and they mark the line and it shows that it's in conflict with that tree, this is the time that you really need to strongly consider calling in professionals, a licensed contractor who's accustomed to dealing with that instead of trying to tackle it to yourself. Aaron, is there anything you wanna add? Aaron: Good call out there Dane. The only thing I will add, there was a photo that was shown earlier in the presentation where there was a lot of tree roots in a trench, and Dane had mentioned it, but there was actually three gas lines in that same photo. So I can tell you from experience, if you are gonna be removing a tree, obviously we know those tree roots are gonna be extending out, but a lot of times that gas line could look very similar to a tree root and it's unfortunate, but we've had some instances where people have cut through what they thought was a tree root and it was actually the gas line. So again, just a reminder, make that fast free call, make sure you know where your utilities are and that you've identified them before you start cutting these roots out. Jason: Thank you Aaron. Next question. I have a project that I'll be doing in stages, landscaping, building a fence, and replacing shrubs. It will likely take six to eight weeks. How often do I need to call 811? -: Wow, I really appreciate this question. An 811 ticket is good for 28 calendar days. So it's really important that you do two things if your project is gonna go beyond that 28 days, is first, make sure those marks remain present through the entire length of your project. And the second is to make sure that your 811 ticket remains valid. So if it looks like you're bumping up against that 28 day window, make that fast free call to 811, say hey, my project's gonna be extended and they will extend that 811 ticket for an additional 28 days. And if it goes beyond that 28 days before you get to that 28th day, make that fast free call and they'll extend it again. You can continue to extend an 811 ticket almost indefinitely, but it's really more important beyond just making sure you have a valid ticket, but making sure those marks remain visible throughout the entire length of your project. Jason: All right, thank you Dane. Next question, I'm going to be installing a new paver to replace an old one and not going any deeper. Do I still need to call 811? -: This is a great question. I'm gonna kick it over to my partner, Aaron, you wanna tackle this one? Aaron: Sure, I'll take this one. So the answer is yes. So anytime that you're gonna be moving any type of dirt, as Dane mentioned, even as small as a teaspoon, calling 811 and having all the utilities marked out gives the person who's digging knowledge of where those utilities are. There's probably a high probability chance that a utility was installed before the pavers that you're removing or replacing are there now. We see this a lot of times with driveway work, paver work, all sorts of stuff that happens on somebody's property. I've done some paver work myself and I

know that I've had to break out a shovel and move some dirt and get that base rock going and you really having to get that shovel into the ground. And every time I've done it, I've called 811, make sure that there's no utilities in my area, but if there is, dig safely. You can still remove everything from the old pavers, put the new stuff down, but it gives you that peace of mind of knowing exactly where those utilities are. Jason: Thank you Aaron. Next question. This is a good one. How do I know if all lines have been marked for my project site? Follow up question. What if I don't see marks by the legal start time? -: Really good question. So a couple of things. First you should see marks on the ground, and if you don't see any marks in the area that you're planning to work, stop, call 811 back and let 811 know that you don't see any marks. The second thing you can do is look on your email because when you submitted your 811 ticket, you include your email address, which is where 811 and all the utilities will send the positive response to let you know that the utilities have responded and how they've responded. But if you don't see any marks on the ground, don't begin digging. Call 811 back, tell them, hey, I've got a legal start date and I wanna make sure that I'm digging safely, but there are no marks on the ground. And they'll take the appropriate action to call the utility and let them know and find out what's going on. Please, please, please wait until there's marks on the ground, wait until you get that positive response before you dig. You don't wanna endanger your family, your home, your neighborhood because you dug without knowing where those marks are. Aaron, is there anything you wanna add? Aaron: Just the only thing to add there, so remember if you do see, we'll call it PG&E marks, so if you see yellow marks or red marks, that doesn't mean that all the utilities have already shown up. So sometimes we've had situations where people have seen a blue mark which is for water and then they think all the utilities have responded. So remember, each utility is sending out their own representatives to mark the lines. So you should have a couple different colors. You're gonna want to make sure that your legal start time has come. But another thing here too is USA North and these call centers, they're a resource, Dane mentioned it, but if you ever have questions, you can call them and provide your USA ticket and ask if all the utilities have responded. That's a real safe way to make sure you know that every utility has responded out. Jason: All right, thank you Aaron. Looks like we have time for two more questions. First one, what about emergency projects like a broken sewer line? Can I get my location marked faster than two days? -: There is always that possibility. Yes, an emergency does take the precedent and so call 811 immediately, advise them that you've got an emergency situation, a sewer leak, and they will reach out to all the representative utilities, which might have any utilities that could be in conflict with the work you're performing. But it's really one thing that you can start doing is hand dig safely with a shovel in order to expose the area that you're gonna have to do your work. And remember, hand digging safely can help expose the area. And just while you're digging, make sure you don't damage any underground utilities, so don't go in there with a pickax or something aggressive digging. Kind of just a small little shovel scoop at a time will probably help you to expose the area that you have to work. But for an emergency ticket, call 811, they'll have all the utilities respond out. Aaron, anything else? Aaron: No, I think you covered that well. Just a little heads up on that is each one of these utilities is gonna get a notification that it's an emergency and then it will go to a supervisor to review that. On PG&E's side, we'll reach out, find out what the emergency is and try to give you an estimate is when we can get a locator there. Sometimes it takes a little time, an hour or two, but we definitely would like to get somebody out there to mark there as quickly as possible when it is an emergency situation. Jason: All right, thank you Aaron. Final question. I'm going to be working in my backyard. Is it reasonable to expect that any lines would run from the street to the front of my house and

not in the back? -: This is a really common conception, but it may not be true. It's not uncommon for utilities to run behind your home. There are actually whole utility right of way corridors that could run directly behind your home. So if your garbage pickup is behind your house and there's a road behind your house, that's typically a utility right of way easement where all the utilities may have buried their lines. So it might be beyond that fence line, but the utilities will travel from behind the fence line up to your home. It's not uncommon. You also may be unaware of other utilities that could travel through your backyard. There are locations where there's gas line, water line, transmission lines that could travel through your property and you may not be aware of it. So again, it's always important before you begin any digging project, big or small, make that fast free call to 811. Aaron, anything you want to add? Aaron: I know this is the last question. My only add to this one is, if you are doing a project in your backyard, as Dane mentioned, call 811. And in a perfect world, you're gonna find out that there's no utilities in your backyard and that way you can dig safely with the knowledge knowing that there's nothing back there. I personally took on a a project recently. I called 811, delineated my area in the backyard and I got a positive response from all utilities that I had no utilities back there. That certainly made it much easier and much more comfortable for me to do that project safely. Jason: Thank you, Aaron. That ends the Q&A. And with that, I will turn it over to Dane to wrap us up. -: Well I wanna thank all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us today to learn more about safe digging practices. We want you to be safe in your next digging project, and if you need more information, grab that QR code at the bottom of the screen. Please have a safe day and we'll see you the next time. (no audio) (no audio) (no audio)