



# Trenching



## Getting started guide for your home

If you are beginning a construction project such as building a home, adding rooms to your property or installing appliances, air conditioners, an electric vehicle charging station or upgrading your meter panel, it may be necessary to dig a trench to allow for utility installations or upgrades. Gas and electric services are often installed in a joint trench, which may also contain lines for other services like telephone and cable.

Although you may dig a trench yourself, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) recommends that you use a licensed contractor. If the trench fails to meet certain technical standards, it will not pass PG&E's rigorous safety inspection. This may result in project delays and additional costs.

### Follow these steps to get started:

#### 1 Before you begin trenching

Before contacting PG&E, you must secure the appropriate permits required by your city or county building and planning department. Be sure to have all approved documentation ready to submit to PG&E, this will help save time as you begin your project.

Apply for new or upgraded electric service using [Customer Connections Online](https://www.pge.com/CustomerConnections) at [www.pge.com/CustomerConnections](https://www.pge.com/CustomerConnections). You will be assigned a dedicated PG&E customer service representative who becomes the point of contact for you or your contractor.

Your PG&E representative will guide you throughout the project and provide a drawing that illustrates the trench route with specifications.

Right before you plan to dig your trench PG&E recommends you schedule a pre-construction meeting with the PG&E inspector and your PG&E representative to help you meet the technical standards and pass the PG&E safety inspection.

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## 2 General trenching requirements

**Safety:** Make sure that trenches near pedestrian or vehicle traffic are barricaded to ensure safety.

Call 811 before you dig to notify utilities to mark existing underground utility lines. This will help you avoid damaging the existing utility equipment underground when you dig.

**Separation:** Provide at least three feet of horizontal separation from trenches containing propane lines and sewer, water, or storm drainpipes, since these are not permitted in a multiple utility trench.

**Trench Occupants:** All equipment in a utility trench must be owned by an entity that is a member of the Underground Service Alert (USA), a California organization that helps ensure public safety by coordinating information about the location of buried utility lines. Private lines such as irrigation controllers, and wires for outdoor lighting are not allowed in a joint trench.

**Excavation:** Dig the trench according to the trench drawing and the standards found in Joint Trench Configuration and Occupancy Guide at [www.pge.com/Trench](http://www.pge.com/Trench) in the Electric and Gas Service Requirements, the GREENBOOK at [www.pge.com/greenbook](http://www.pge.com/greenbook).

**Backfill:** Backfill must provide a smooth bedding area for the utility lines and supply at least 12 inches of cover over the conduit or pipe. Make sure to use permitted material. Sand is recommended. Details on backfill can be found in the Joint Trench Configuration and Occupancy Guide at [www.pge.com/Trench](http://www.pge.com/Trench) in the GREENBOOK at [www.pge.com/greenbook](http://www.pge.com/greenbook).

**Conduit Installation:** All conduit systems must pass PG&E's visual inspection and be tested for compliance by successfully inserting and pulling a flexible steel mandrel through the entire conduit system. For details on mandrels refer to the GREENBOOK section titled [Electric Service: Underground](#).

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## 3 Notification

California law requires customers to notify utilities at least two working days before digging. Customers can notify all affected utility providers with a single call through a free service offered by Underground Service Alert. Call 811, Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. except for holidays.

For more details, visit Underground Service Alert (USA) [www.usanorth.org](http://www.usanorth.org) or [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

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## 4 Additional References

You or your contractor may need to refer to the GREENBOOK at [www.pge.com/greenbook](http://www.pge.com/greenbook), which is a reference manual containing helpful information such as technical specifications and drawings. The following sections may be especially useful for a project that requires trenching:

™ [Electric Service—Underground](#)

™ [Gas Service](#)

™ [Joint Trench Configuration and Occupancy Guide](#)

Contact your PG&E representative immediately if you are unable to comply with the drawing or a written standard provided by PG&E or your local government agency.

For more information on how PG&E can help with building and renovation projects for your home, visit [www.pge.com/building](http://www.pge.com/building) or call 1-877-743-7782.