



Palo Alto City Hall
250 Hamilton Avenue, 3rd Floor
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Attention Contractors and Excavators: Ensure Job Site Safety & Avoid Delays—Always Call 811 Before You Dig

Dear Contractor and Excavator,

As a professional in the excavation industry, you know that safety and efficiency on the job site are paramount. A crucial, and legally required, step in every project involving digging is to contact 811 before you break ground.

Why Call 811?

Underground utilities can be just inches below the surface, and striking them poses significant risks:

- **Safety Hazards:** Risk of severe injury or death from gas leaks, explosions, or electrocution.
- **Project Delays:** Damage to infrastructure results in work stoppages and costly repairs.
- **Legal Compliance:** Calling 811 is required by law.

The 811 Process for Contractors:

1. **Notify:** Call 811 or submit an online request through USA North 811 at least two full working days before you plan to dig.
2. **Pre-Mark:** Delineate your proposed excavation area using **white** paint or flags so locators know where to mark.
3. **Wait:** Allow the required time for utility operators to mark their lines with the American Public Works Association (APWA) Uniform Color Codes or issue an “all clear”.
4. **Confirm & Respect:** Use your local 811 center’s positive response system to confirm all utilities have responded before you begin work. Once marked, respect the tolerance zone and use hand digging to expose lines a minimum of 24 inches on either side of the markings.
5. **Dig Safely:** Proceed with caution, ensuring continuous communication with all stakeholders on-site.

Remember, every project that involves breaking ground requires a call to 811. Each person or entity performing the excavation must have their own valid ticket.

Thank you for your commitment to safe digging practices. For more information and resources, visit the Common Ground Alliance website (<https://commongroundalliance.com>) or USA North 811 center (<https://usanorth811.org>).

Stay safe and keep your projects on track!

Thank you for your cooperation,
The City of Palo Alto Utilities

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG.

Avoid costly accidents and dangerous conditions!

Call Underground Service Alert (USA), a free service, at 811 a minimum of 48 hours prior to any excavation.

It is your responsibility to call USA before digging begins.

Failure to call this number can result in liability for any damage or loss of property.

STEPS TO TAKE

1

Properly mark your excavation area.

2

Call USA and provide a detailed description of where and when you plan to dig.

3

USA will then locate and mark all underground natural gas pipelines and other utilities prior to your excavation work.

RECOGNIZING A PIPELINE LEAK



SMELL

Mercaptan, a sulfur chemical, is added to natural gas to make it smell similar to rotten eggs. The smell of mercaptan helps you detect even the smallest amount of natural gas in the air.



SIGHT

Fire near pipeline; unusual dirt or dust blowing; pool of liquid on the ground, possibly bubbling; persistent bubbles in standing water; discolored vegetation



SOUND

Explosion near pipeline; hissing or roaring sound

If you detect a gas leak or hit a pipeline while digging,

leave the area immediately and call from elsewhere. Call 911 or the City of Palo Alto 24-hour emergency number at **(650) 329-2579**.

Do not strike a match or look for a gas leak!

For More Information, go to:

paloalto.gov/safeutility



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