



USA North 811

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2020

Having broken major records in ticket volume in 2019, the beginning of 2020 was off to a fast start, with January and February totaling 40% more tickets than the previous year. There's no doubt that 2020 was an unforgettable year, and the stats show that lockdown measures slowed ticket growth over a few months. April saw the first slowdown, with a slight decrease in ticket volume compared to 2019. Then the start of summer brought another small dip in volume, which never really recovered to pre-2020 numbers through the end of the year. With the exception of November and December, every month of 2020 totaled at least 138,000 tickets. A nice surprise compared to the record set in 2019, which saw every month totaling at least 100,000 tickets. Total ticket count for 2020 ended up 1.2% short of 2019 numbers, just shy of 1.8 million.

Total Tickets

1,771,135

(+2% vs 2019)



Law Changes

2020 came with several new regulations and law updates specifically for our California excavators and utility members.

Electronic Positive Response (EPR)

The Electronic Positive Response requirement for utility members in California is now in effect as of January 1st, 2021. Utility members are now required to record their response to a ticket in the EPR system, after having provided that response in the traditional manner (marking the site, giving the all-clear, etc). The simple action of recording that response with EPR allows for a single, centralized place for all contractors, excavators, farmers, and homeowners to check the status of their ticket online 24/7.

The process for utility companies to post this response is as easy as clicking a link in the email that they already receive with each ticket. Other technological solutions exist if that member is using a Ticket Management System or other form of response software. If you are a utility member and have questions about EPR or how to get set up, contact our Member Services team at MemberServices@usanorth811.org.

The Dig Safe Board

The Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board, or Dig Safe Board for short, gained its enforcement authority on July 1, 2020. This new regulatory body has the responsibility to investigate violations, develop safety standards and regulations, coordinate education and outreach efforts, and enforce, or recommend enforcement, to those found in violation of safe digging laws. More information on the Dig Safe Board and how you can get involved in shaping the future of the industry can be found on their website at <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/>.

Area of Continual Excavation (ACE Tickets)

Farmers and flood control facilities (when performing normal business activities) now have a new ticket type available to them called an ACE ticket. With this new California law, the excavator in question can submit a locate request for an area that will be valid for an entire year (instead of the standard 28 days of normal tickets) because of the continual nature of work happening in the agriculture and flood control industries. The

new regulation comes along with some on-site meeting requirements, depending on the situation and types of facilities in the area. For more information on ACE tickets, the special forms that need to be signed for on-site meetings, and who qualifies for an ACE ticket, visit our website at <https://usanorth811.org/services/ace>.

Damage Notification Requirements

Discovering or causing damage to an underground line has always required that the excavator contact the owner of that line as soon as it is safe to do so. Under certain circumstances, like when hazardous liquid or gas is exposed and escaping from the line, 911 emergency services must also be called. A new regulation in the California Code of Regulations now requires that excavators notify the 811 center of any damage caused or discovered in the field under the following circumstances:

- Damage to any natural gas or hazardous liquid pipeline, whether or not there is escape of product,
- Damage to a high priority line of any kind,
- Damage resulting in injury that requires treatment at a healthcare clinic or hospital, and
- Any damage causing a fatality.

By collecting this 'damage data', the Dig Safe Board will be better able to recommend new regulations and safety practices to avoid costly and critical line strikes in the future, ultimately keeping everyone safer in the process.

New Equipment Standards in the Tolerance Zone

In California you can now use a "handheld, percussive device when exposing an underground line within the tolerance zone of a facility (24 inches on either side of the line). The tool's specifications must meet strict requirements of size, weight, and type (listed below). Additionally, the underground line in question cannot be 'Orange' (communications, fiber, etc.), or indicate the existence of street lighting or traffic signal lines. The soil type must be classified as "Type A or Type B, as provided in Appendix A of Section 1541.1 of Title 8 [OSHA regulations]."

- The tool must be a handheld, percussive pneumatic, electric, or hydraulic hammer that drives a bit.





- The tool weight without accessory shall not exceed 40 lbs.
- The bit used shall be no less than 4 inches wide, have a rounded edge, and present no sharp surfaces.
- The bit edge shall be placed parallel, not perpendicular, to the orientation of the underground line, as indicated by the field mark.

Excavators and Current Contact Info

Title 19 of California Code of Regulations Section 4401 states that “an excavator shall provide the contact information of a person knowledgeable in the proposed excavation activities so that [a utility] operator may contact the person regarding excavation activities that may occur around the [underground line] in the area...”

This regulation makes current and valid contact info a requirement to be provided for any ticket submitted through 811, so as to avoid any miscommunication in the field, which can be costly for all those involved.

Utility Members and Current Contact Info

All utility members in California are required to provide and maintain valid and current contact information to the 811 center, as well as notify the center if and when there are any changes. Title 19 of the CCR Section 4003 states:

“Each member shall provide at least one valid and current contact that includes the name, telephone number, and email address of an individual or business unit that can reach a person authorized to respond to inquiries regarding the determination of the exact location of subsurface installations operated by the member.”

This crucial contact info helps in getting things resolved in the field when time is of the essence.

Solar Application Requirements

For those utility members that are also governing bodies, like municipalities, counties, special districts or local government, there is a new requirement in regards to solar permit applications. An application to install a solar energy system shall

include a reference about the legal requirement to notify 811 before any excavation can occur, even if for only a grounding rod. If you need assistance on how to craft this reference, or what law you should be citing, please feel free to reach out to Bryan.Harris@usanorth811.org.

Future Mapping of Utility Lines

Beginning January 1, 2023, all new underground facilities must be mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS) and maintained as permanent records of the utility owner. Two years can go by quickly, so start getting the pieces in place now for your organization. You'll want to be prepared for the new California law when the time comes.

Electronic Positive Response – How Do I Post a Response?

Use of the Electronic Positive Response (EPR) system is now mandatory for all utility members in California. The system provides a number of benefits for both excavators and members, and is easy to use. The state of Nevada is also pursuing the legislative process for mandated EPR, but it's available to use now, no matter which state you are in.

EPR provides a way for member utility companies to communicate with excavators on the status of their ticket. Excavation laws in California and Nevada already require that all utility members respond to every request they receive by either marking the site, notifying the excavator that the site is clear of their facilities, or providing information to the excavator regarding the location of the facilities (maps, drawings, etc.). Electronic Positive Response goes one step further by allowing the utility member to record how they responded to each ticket. That response will then be available at www.USANorth811.org/epr, allowing contractors, excavators, farmers, and homeowners in California and Nevada to check the status of their ticket responses 24/7. To learn more about using Electronic Positive Response, and to see the various types of responses available in the system, please visit <https://usanorth811.org/positive-response>.

Posting to the EPR system is easy; there are two simple ways to record your response to EPR:

1. If you use ticket management software, there's a process for getting the EPR functionality integrated into your system. As you use your management software to track tickets and respond appropriately, you can

use that same software to quickly post what the response was to EPR. In most cases, it's simply clicking an extra button or two to send off the response to EPR.

2. If you don't use a ticket management system, and instead rely upon the email copy of the ticket that is sent to your inbox, then you already have the ability to use EPR. At the bottom of every ticket that you receive in your email inbox is a unique link, just for that ticket. Once you provide your response to the excavator, open the email, find the link at the bottom titled, "Post a response to this ticket at:" and you'll be directed to the EPR page for that specific ticket with the proper info already filled out. Just enter your name and what the response was from the various choices available, and hit submit. Three clicks and it's done.

Remember to keep in mind that you are still required to respond to the excavator directly, as you always have been. The EPR process is simply recording what that response was.



Education Resources

Below is a list of education resources for anyone involved in the excavation industry. If you are a utility owner and want to get the excavators in your area trained, or you're looking for 811 Digging Partner decals, you can find what you need here.

811 Pro Coming Soon

We're expanding our current online training platform for all excavators, homeowners, utility members, and anyone else in need of safe digging knowledge. Using a new tiered training approach, you'll have all of the tools and training you need for success in the field. Our current Damage Prevention Academy (DPA), which is available now at www.usanorth811.training, serves as the most extensive and in-depth level of training to becoming an 811Pro. State laws and regulations, best practices, USA North 811 policies, and more will be covered throughout the different levels of training, with our most advanced course, the DPA, offering a Gold Shovel Standard certificate for one year. No matter if you're a homeowner looking for tips on how to get started with 811, or a seasoned pro that digs every day, you can pick the level that's right for you. We're very excited to bring this new training platform and resource hub to the masses, so keep an eye on your inbox for news about 811Pro coming soon. Be educated. Be an 811Pro.

A small sample of some of the features to come:

- **Fully immersive and online** – Visit our virtual jobsite without leaving the room.
- **Stories from the field** – See the point of view of different folks that make up the safe digging community.
- **Toolbox for any job** – No matter what you are trying to accomplish, find everything you need to help you through the 811 process in our fully loaded Toolbox.
- **And a whole lot more.**

Education and Promotional Items

If you're looking for 811 Safe Digging Partner decals for fleet vehicles or hard hats, color code cards to remind your crew what the colors on the ground mean, or just need some Excavation Manuals for your team in the field, then reach out to Bryan Harris at bryan.harris@usanorth811.org or fill out the form at the bottom of this page: <https://usanorth811.org/education>. Bryan can send you anything you need to help spread the word about 811 and the importance of safe digging.

USA North 811 Excavation Manual

Whether you're in California or Nevada, whether you speak English or Spanish, the USA North 811 Excavation Manual has valuable info for damage prevention. Each manual has a Handbook that covers best practices, 811 policies, and general excavation information. There is also a Law portion of the manual that has all of the damage prevention laws, regulations, and codes for your state printed in black and white. Each one can be viewed and downloaded separately from our website at: <http://usanorth811.org/education>

Reach-out for Outreach

Have questions? Not sure where to go or who to ask? Talking to our Outreach Specialist, Bryan Harris, is the perfect place to start. He'll be happy to take any kind of question or concern that you may have about 811 or USA North, and find the answers you're looking for. You can reach him at bryan.harris@usanorth811.org.

Reducing the USA North 811 Footprint

In mid-2019, the USA North 811 Board of Directors formed a building committee to tackle the issue of our 10-year lease coming to an end at 4005 Port Chicago Highway, Concord, CA. Weighing the various options from cost, location, and the needs of the call center staff, the committee decided that the most cost-effective approach would be to reduce our footprint by remodeling the suite at our current location in Concord. The main goal of this new remodel would be to shrink the amount of office space needed by USA North 811, and shift the majority of office and call center staff to work-at-home positions. We were slightly lucky in this regard, in that we were ahead of the curve when the eventual shut down orders went into effect in March of 2020. Most of our Damage Prevention Specialists had already been moved out of the office, and the remaining few easily made the transition.

Little did we know that our decision to move the majority of our workforce home would put us ahead of the curve when the eventual shut down orders went into effect in March of 2020. With everything that 2020 brought us, we are proud of everything our amazing team has accomplished and their continued commitment to safe digging.

Regional Partners

Want to get involved?

Join our Regional Common Ground Alliance partners in California and Nevada to share damage prevention strategies:

California Regional
Common Ground Alliance
carcga.org

Nevada Regional
Common Ground Alliance
nrcga.org

National
Common Ground Alliance
commongroundalliance.com

Contacts at USA North 811

Online Ticket Support
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Utility Membership Support
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Education & Outreach
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