

USA NORTH 811

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

////// TWENTY TWENTY-ONE



Total ticket volume in 2021 increased significantly compared to the previous year. That might not come as a big surprise, as 2020 was a notoriously difficult year in most respects, but even when compared to 2019, 2021 has proven to be yet another record-breaking year. From March to August, the total ticket volume per month fluctuated from 179,000 to 192,000. That's a huge increase in what we've experienced in the past, considering that only a few short years ago, in 2018, the highest ticket total for a single month was 125,000. An overwhelming percentage of those tickets were submitted online, bolstering our vision of an online-focused future for damage prevention. The **lowest** percentage of all tickets submitted online for a given month in 2021 was 82.5%, with a running average of 85% overall through November. The average speed of answer metric took a little bit of a hit this year, as Underground Service Alert faced some of the same staffing challenges that have affected the whole country. It's also worth pointing out that **eight** of the top ten highest volume days on record were in 2021 (the other two were from 2019)...yes, 2021 was quite a busy year.

Total Tickets

1,959,407

+10.6% vs 2020 (all stats through Dec 2021)



NEW IN CA LAW

Willful Violations Get More Costly

In October, California Governor Newsom signed into law Senate Bill No. 297, which adds the following provision to **California GOV Code 4216** (active January 1st, 2022):

4216.6 (a) (3) *Any operator or excavator who knowingly and willfully violates any of the provisions of this article in a way that results in damage to a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline subsurface installation and that results in the escape of any flammable, toxic, or corrosive gas or liquid is subject to a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).*

This means that *any party*, whether excavator or utility owner, that willfully violates any of the safe digging laws of 4216, that results in the escape of hazardous product, can be fined a maximum of \$100,000. Previously, the maximum fine was \$50,000 for willful violation of the law, with no mention of the escape of hazardous product [that provision is still in place, **4216.6 (a) (2)**].

EPR Extensions Coming to an End

The beginning of 2021 saw the implementation of the mandated “Electronic Positive Response” system in California. In short, this system requires utility members to post what type of response they provided to an excavator on an online, electronic system hosted by the regional 811 centers, thus giving all excavators an easy and clear way to check the responses on each of their tickets. The Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board was able to grant an extension to those utility members that qualified, giving them until the end of the year to comply with the new requirement. That extension is now coming to an end. All utility members across California will be required to use the EPR system on every ticket they receive starting January 1st, 2022. Make sure you are up to date and ready to start using EPR if you have yet to do so. Reach out to our Member Services department with any questions at memberservices@usanorth811.org. For inquiries in Southern California, visit www.digalert.org.

Microtrenching for Fiber

The state of California recently enacted the “Broadband Deployment Acceleration Best Practices Act of 2021,” which aims to promote quick and cost-effective ways to install fiber communication lines to connect more Californians to high-speed internet. Senate Bill No. 378 adds this new law to **California GOV Code 65964.5** (Title 7. Planning and Land Use) and becomes active on January 1st, 2022. In short, the law will allow local agencies to approve microtrenching for the installation of underground fiber, but the installation must be for fiber only. It also allows for the local agency in question to revoke the use of microtrenching to bury fiber lines if doing so would have an adverse impact on the public health or safety. Microtrenching is defined as an “excavation trench that is less than or equal to 4 inches in width and not less than 12 inches in depth and not more than 26 inches in depth and that is created for the purpose of installing a subsurface pipe or conduit.”

GIS Mapping of Underground Facilities will be Required in 2023

All utility operators in California will be required to map newly installed underground facilities with a Geographic Information System (GIS) and held as permanent records. There is an exception for oil and gas flowlines three inches or less in diameter located within an oil field. Here’s the complete law, which you can find in **California GOV Code 4216**:

4216.3 (a) (5) *Commencing January 1, 2023, all new subsurface installations shall be mapped using a geographic information system and maintained as permanent records of the operator. This paragraph shall not apply to oil and gas flowlines three inches or less in diameter that are located within the administrative boundaries of an oil field as designated by the Geologic Energy Management Division. For purposes of this paragraph, the following terms have the following meanings:*

(A) *“Flowline” means any pipeline that connects an oil, gas, or natural gas liquids well with a gathering line or header.*



! IMPORTANT UPDATE

A STEP FORWARD WITH PELICANCORP

Our ticketing software is changing in 2022. A change that we hope will help propel Underground Service Alert into the present and sustain us far into the future. We've partnered with PelicanCorp to create an entirely new ticketing software platform, one which will allow us to offer a much smoother experience for submitting and managing tickets for our online users. We are aiming at a cutover date of July 1st, 2022, but keep your eyes peeled on your inbox for any news or updates. There will be a lot more information to share on this as July 1st gets closer. Among some of the features we hope to have implemented on launch:

- A mobile app you can use on your phone or tablet (for real this time)
- Integration with Google Maps
- Precise, digital selection of excavation sites
- Less 'open text fields' on tickets (improved consistency)
- And a whole lot more...

If you are one of our utility members, this new ticketing platform will change everything.

From how you receive tickets to how you respond to them, especially if you are using a Ticket Management System. Even if you don't use a TMS, there will be big changes coming with this new ticketing software, so be on the lookout for more announcements and details regarding the impending switch to PelicanCorp.

38.041307,
-122.110783

38.010946,
-122.022888

(B) "Gathering line" means a pipeline that transports liquid hydrocarbons between any of the following: multiple wells, a testing facility, a treating and production facility, a storage facility, or a custody transfer facility.

(C) "Header" means a chamber from which liquid or gas is distributed to or from smaller pipelines.

NEW IN NV LAW

Nevada to Require EPR

An Electronic Positive Response requirement, similar to what is in place in California, will be coming to the state of Nevada in 2022. Having had access to the system since 2019, utility members of Nevada will soon be *required* to use the system to post ticket responses for all the tickets they receive. Implementing the necessary policy changes and getting your ticket management system up to date **now**, before the requirement is put in place, will help ensure that you are prepared and ahead of the pack when it becomes official. Discussions are ongoing with Nevada regulators and the NRCGA, so as soon as we have a confirmed date on this new law requirement, we will be sure to share it with you right away. Make sure our web address, **@usanorth811.org**, is whitelisted in your company email system so you never miss an important update or law change.

Hand Digging will Soon Require a Ticket

The definition of excavation in NRS 455.092 currently describes only the use of mechanical equipment or explosives as being considered excavation (and thus, requiring an 811 ticket). That definition is going to change to **also** include any type of hand tools used for digging on the jobsite. This would require **any** type of excavation taking place to have a valid 811 ticket for the duration of the job, even if mechanical equipment or explosives aren't being used. The details are still being worked out for this law change coming in 2022, but as soon as we have solid information on when to expect this change, as well as the details of exactly what it means for our stakeholders, we'll be sending out an important law update via email. To get involved and be a part of the current discussion, check out the Nevada Regional Common Ground Alliance at www.nrcga.org.

BENEFITS OF THE NEW TICKET SIZE POLICY

On July 1st of 2021, a new ticket size policy was put in place at USA North 811 and DigAlert, restricting most locate tickets to no more than a half mile (for any dimension), with a few exceptions.

The Ticket Continuity Committee, made up of representatives from all stakeholder groups throughout California and Nevada, agreed to take these steps to make underground excavations safer and more efficient. Some of the benefits our membership and excavator partners have experienced reinforces the idea that a smaller ticket size results in fewer delays and enhanced safety. Just a few of the benefits that we've heard about:

- Locators have smaller jobsites, allowing them to focus attention on smaller areas and providing a higher level of service, potentially responding to tickets faster.
 - A smaller ticket size has helped eliminate confusion over long, complex job descriptions, allowing for faster, more accurate field marks.
- Excavators can avoid costly delays by having larger projects broken up into smaller ticket areas.
 - If a damage or other delay only affects a small section of the jobsite, which is covered by one ticket, then work can continue in other areas of the jobsite that are unaffected and covered by a separate ticket.

- Having a smaller ticket can lead to fewer members notified on the ticket.
 - Having fewer members notified means fewer utility responses to track and wait for.

Although more tickets are being created due to the Ticket Size Policy, the cost of membership is mostly unaffected because USA North 811 does not charge directly per ticket, but by overall percentage. To learn more about the Ticket Size Policy, check out this info page (which also has a link to a recorded webinar on the subject):

[Ticket Size Policy Info Page](#)

EDUCATION AND PROMO ITEMS

811 Pro Training Course

April of 2021 saw the launch of a brand new online training program at 811Pro.com. The 360° virtual environment, which puts you **on the jobsite**, has changed the game for online training. The 811 Pro Course received a great response from both utility company workers and excavators alike, with hundreds of professionals already certified in the laws and best practices for safe digging in California and Nevada. We're hoping to build on that foundation in 2022 by adding more modules and offering new features to help 811 Pro grow even more. Coming very soon in January, 811 Pro will be offered in Spanish for both California and Nevada. Have downtime due to weather or

other job-related delays? Why not get a Gold Shovel Standard certificate for free at 811pro.com. Works on mobile, so you can even do it in the field when you're away from the computer.

Sign up today at www.811pro.com

Education, Webinars, and more...

Monthly webinars are available for everything 811 related. Whether you need to learn the Online Ticket system, catch up on new law updates, or just want to check in to make sure you're up to date, there's always some kind of topic for you. Take a look at our Webinar schedule page to see what's coming up (schedule is updated often, so keep it bookmarked!).

[Live Webinar Series](#)

Promo Items, Decals, and Excavation Manuals

Are you a Safe Digging Partner? Why not grab a decal for the work truck to let everyone know? Want to distribute the most current Excavation Manual to your crew? Need more of those handy Color Code Cards? Use this link to order whatever you'd like and help us spread the 811 message to all those that might not "know what's below."

[Order Page](#)

811PRO in
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COMING SOON

START OUR FREE PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTOR COURSE TO

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Regional Partners

Want to get involved?

Join the Regional Common Ground Alliance 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
Chris Botting
chris.botting@usanorth811.org
925-222-6518

Utility Membership Support
Nick White
nick.white@usanorth811.org
925-222-6501

Education & Outreach
Bryan Harris
bryan.harris@usanorth811.org
925-222-6515