
California Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board
("Dig Safe Board")

August 10, 2020

Agenda Item No. 6 (Information Item) – Staff Report

Discussion of Reasonable Care Standards Workshop

PRESENTER

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SUMMARY

The Dig Safe Board ("Board") is mandated by Government Code § 4216.18 to establish standards in excavation around subsurface installations. Following the discussion on how to approach reasonable care standards at the July 2020 Board meeting, the Board has stakeholder interest and member support to examine standards for different excavation types, including trenchless excavation. Staff has coordinated with the Reasonable Care Standards Committee and has proposed a workshop and survey for the end of August to learn more about the practice of trenchless excavation. Staff recommends the Board direct staff to proceed with the workshop and survey on reasonable care around trenchless excavation and present the results of each to the Board at a future meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 Strategic Objective: Improve Excavation and Location Practice Safety
Strategic Activity: Reasonable Care Standards

BACKGROUND

Statute

Government Code § 4216.18¹ requires the Board to "develop a standard or set of standards relevant to safety practices in excavating around subsurface installations and procedures and guidance in encouraging those practices." These standards are "not intended to replace other relevant standards... but are to inform areas currently without established standards."

¹ CA Government Code § 4216.18
https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=4216.18&lawCode=GOV

Board Meetings and Workshop

The Board discussed the process of developing standards for reasonable care during its June 21, 2018², August 20, 2018³, November 8, 2018, January 14, 2019⁴, February 11, 2019, and July 13, 2020⁵ Board meetings as well as at a workshop on April 24, 2019.⁶

DISCUSSION

Framework of Stakeholder Groups and Practices

In the July 13, 2020 meeting, the Board discussed a framework for approaching reasonable care and emphasized the need to understand the different practices of organizations and individuals within each of the excavation types that make up the wide field of excavation. The Board discussed how development of a set of comprehensive standards would take place over time as knowledge and understanding about the different processes and practices used to excavate grows. The Board discussed the idea that safety standards ought to be approached with an understanding that different practices may require different standards, and that each step in the timeline of an excavation project should be considered when considering such standards.

Reasonable Care Standards in Trenchless Excavation

In the July 13, 2020 meeting, the Board heard support for reasonable care standards work around directional drilling from a representative of Southern California Gas Company. Support for this topic was discussed by the Board as an example of a stakeholder group and a specific practice for which there are existing questions over what constitutes reasonable care, for which the stakeholders involved would benefit from additional inquiry and group discussion to better understand each other's thoughts and ideas. In cooperation with the Reasonable Care Standards Committee, staff determined that the interest in this excavation type provides an opportunity for where the Board should begin its work.

Trenchless excavation techniques are practices that involve the installation of subsurface facilities by methods that do not disturb the ground-level surface above the facility except at the entry and exit points. The types of trenchless excavation vary; each are unique and present their own safety risks. One type of trenchless excavation, horizontal directional drilling, uses a drill string to excavate an underground pilot bore across the length of a project after which a pre-assembled facility is then pulled back through the pilot hole.⁷ Other trenchless methods

² June 21, 2018, Agenda Item No. 4, *Process for Standard Development*, <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/media/2031/item-4-process-for-standard-development.pdf>

³ August 20-21, 2018, Agenda Item No. 5, *Reasonable Care Standards*, <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/media/2039/item-5-reasonable-care-standards.pdf>

⁴ January 14-15, 2018, Agenda Item No. 6, *Legal Counsel Opinion on Government Code Section 4216.4, Subdivisions (a) and (b)*, <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/media/2089/agenda-item-6-legal-opinion-re-gc-42164.pdf>

⁵ July 13-14, 2020, Agenda Item No. 7, *Discussion on Reasonable Care Standards Development*, <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/media/2432/item-7-discussion-on-reasonable-care-standards-development.pdf>

⁶ April 24, 2019, *Notice of Public Workshop*, <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov/media/2061/april-24-2019-public-workshop-agenda.pdf>

⁷ North American Society for Trenchless Technology (“NASTT”), *Glossary of Trenchless Terms*: <https://nastt.org/resources/glossary/>. Accessed July 23rd, 2020.

may install a facility directly in the initial bore, use an auger in the excavation process, or vary in the size of drilling rig and expanse of excavation from hundreds to thousands of feet at a time.

Workshop on Trenchless Excavation

Trenchless excavation encompasses a diverse field of practices and methods that the Board must learn more about prior to discussing any standards for reasonable care in the area. To increase knowledge about these practices, staff and the Reasonable Care Standards Committee have proposed a workshop and survey to solicit stakeholder feedback about existing practices in trenchless excavation.

The proposed workshop would be scheduled for late August in a webinar/teleconference format. Access information for the meeting would be posted on the Board's website. A survey would be released following the workshop to allow those unable to attend to provide feedback.

Staff propose the following questions for use in the workshop that will guide the conversation around existing trenchless excavation practices:

- What hazards or risks do you pay attention to when using trenchless excavation methods?
- What communication or information sharing between project owners, engineers, operators, excavators and other parties takes place when planning and conducting trenchless excavation projects?
- How do you prepare a trenchless excavation jobsite around existing underground facilities?
- How do you take care to avoid nearby subsurface installations while performing trenchless excavation?

CONCLUSION

The Board is approaching reasonable care standards by examining the existing practices in different excavation types, beginning with trenchless excavation. Through the proposed reasonable care standards workshop and survey, the Board would hear and learn from stakeholders about this area and begin to understand the safety hazards or practices that could most benefit from standardization.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board direct staff to proceed with the workshop and survey on trenchless excavation practices and present the results of each at a future meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

None