



## NEWS RELEASE

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# CALL 811 TO STOP THE RISE IN PREVENTABLE NATURAL GAS LINE STRIKES

SAN DIEGO, August 10, 2018 – Unsafe digging from construction and landscaping activities resulted in more than 400 gas leaks locally last year, prompting San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) today to urge residents and contractors to call 811 before starting work to have underground utilities marked out.

Hitting a gas line can result in a serious safety hazard, fires, property damage, loss of utility service, costly repairs and fines. Gas leaks also cause a wide-range of inconveniences to the public including service outages and closed streets and places a strain on emergency personnel.

According to the [Common Ground Alliance](#) (CGA) Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, an underground utility line is damaged every six minutes in the United States because someone decided to dig but didn't call 811.

The frequency of preventable strikes on gas lines in San Diego County has more than doubled since 2010. Already this year, there have been nearly 200 gas emergencies due to construction or landscaping activities.

"These largely preventable incidents now occur almost daily, and some days we respond to multiple gas emergencies," said Gina Orozco-Mejia, SDG&E's vice president of gas distribution. "By simply making a phone call contractors and homeowners can help to reduce the frequency of strikes on gas lines and help keep workers, residents, first responders and our employees safe."

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Damage to underground natural gas lines is often caused by contractors or residents who did not contact 811 in advance of excavation work to have underground utilities marked out. Trenching, drilling, road work, building a deck and installing landscaping are all examples of digging projects that necessitate a call to 811 before starting.

There can be financial consequences for damaging an underground gas line as well. In addition to repair costs, hitting a gas line without first calling 811 could soon result in fines of up to \$50,000 through the California Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board.

Underground utilities, including natural gas pipelines, telephone cables and water lines, are located everywhere throughout the San Diego region, including under streets, sidewalks and private property, sometimes just inches below the surface.

Tomorrow serves as an important annual reminder to call 811 or submit a request at [DigAlert.org](http://DigAlert.org) at least two business days prior to digging. SDG&E will then mark the location of buried gas lines free of charge. There is also a new 811 app available that makes it even easier to schedule and track requests. It typically takes only 24-48 hours to complete a request to mark underground utility lines. Last year, SDG&E completed 136,000 underground utility mark outs.

If you suspect a natural gas pipeline has been damaged or you detect a gas leak call SDG&E immediately at (800) 411-7343. Even a slight gouge, scrape or dent could impair pipeline function or lead to a leak, so it's best to always err on the side of caution.

SDG&E is an innovative San Diego-based energy company that provides clean, safe, and reliable energy to better the lives of the people it serves in San Diego and southern Orange counties. The company is committed to creating a sustainable future by providing around 45 percent of its electricity from renewable sources; modernizing natural gas pipelines; accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles; supporting numerous non-profit partners; and investing in innovative technologies to ensure the reliable operation of the region's infrastructure for generations to come. SDG&E is a subsidiary of Sempra Energy (NYSE: SRE), a Fortune 500 energy services holding company based in San Diego. For more information, visit [SDGEnews.com](http://SDGEnews.com) or connect with SDG&E on Twitter ([@SDGE](https://twitter.com/SDGE)), Instagram ([@SDGE](https://www.instagram.com/SDGE)), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SDGE).

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