



EXCAVATION SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR WILDFIRE CLEANUP

Removing debris from wildfire disaster zones can be dangerous work. Employees face several hazards even after the flames have been extinguished, including the underground infrastructure that may be buried beneath a worksite. Digging with an excavator or other equipment to remove wildfire debris presents the risk of hitting and damaging subsurface installations like natural gas, petroleum, electricity, water, sewer, and telecommunications facilities which may cause a fire, explosion, electric shock, or the release of toxic materials.

It is important for anyone excavating in a wildfire disaster zone to be aware of California's safe digging laws, and the actions that need to be taken to ensure everyone is working safely around buried infrastructure.

DELINEATE THE WORK AREA PRIOR TO CALLING 811.

Prior to calling 811, excavators must mark the work zone using white spray chalk, water based UV paint, flags, stakes, or whiskers. This informs the utility operators where the proposed work will take place so they can locate and mark the underground facilities present.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG.

California's safe digging law always applies, regardless of whether disaster cleanup is happening. Before any excavation can begin, the locations of all underground infrastructure in the work zone must be determined. At least two business days before work begins, excavators must notify the appropriate regional notification center of the proposed work. You can do that by contacting the following organizations, either online or over the phone:

Northern California

USA North 811

Phone: 811

Website: <http://usanorth811.org>

Southern California

DigAlert

Phone: 811

Website: <http://www.digalert.org>

SUBCONTRACTORS NEED THEIR OWN TICKET.

Any party digging in the ground must have their own ticket. Subcontractors cannot work under a general contractor's ticket. This is especially important during wildfire cleanup, which is often an environment where addresses are not easy to see, a lot of people are doing work in one area, and the opportunities for miscommunication are high.

CREATE A SEPARATE TICKET FOR EACH ADDRESS.

Being clear about the specific area you are working in is extremely important, and ensures that the utility owner knows where the proposed work is being done and can locate and mark the underground facilities efficiently.

HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH THE UTILITY OWNER.

It is very important to discuss your work plan and the information you need to complete the job with the owner of the underground facilities in your work zone. That conversation will allow the utility owner to process your ticket efficiently, and provide you with the information you need. Each utility operates differently, which is why this conversation is so important.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW SOMETHING, ASK.

After you have established a working relationship with the utility owners, use them as a resource for any questions that may arise during your wildfire cleanup work. It's better to stop work to get the information you need to perform your job safely, then it is to guess and cause damage to an underground facility, which in turn could damage your equipment, or injure your co-workers, or even yourself.

The goal of working in a disaster zone is the same as everyday work, to get the job done and make sure everyone goes home safely.

The Dig Safe Board was created by the Dig Safe Act of 2016. The Board is responsible for coordinating the state's education, developing safety standards, investigating dig-in accidents, and enforcing violations of the Dig Safe Law. Learn more at: <https://digsafe.fire.ca.gov>.

Additional Wildfire Cleanup Safety Resources:

- Cal/OSHA Worker Safety & Health During Fire Cleanup
<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/wildfire/Worker-Health-and-Safety-During-Fire-Cleanup.html>
- CalRecycle Debris Removal Contractor Requirements
<https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/disaster/wildfires>
- Contractors State License Board Disaster Help Center
http://www.cslb.ca.gov/Media_Room/Disaster_Help_Center/