

**CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**Safety and Enforcement Division**  
**Gas Safety and Reliability Branch**  
**Gas Engineering and Compliance Section**

Incident Investigation Report

**Report Date:** 07/28/2020

**Incident Number:** G 20200507-3044

**Utility:** Southern California Gas      SoCalGas

**Date and Time of the Incident:** 5/5/2020, 10:50:00 AM

**Location of the Incident:** [REDACTED]  
Cutler ,CA  
County: Tulare

**Summary of Incident:**

On May 5, 2020, at approximately 1050 hours, SoCalGas' backhoe operator was excavating when he hit and damaged a gas service tee on a 4-inch high pressure steel gas main. This resulted in damage to the 4-inch steel high pressure gas main and gas release into the atmosphere. There were no injuries, fatalities, fire, or third-party damage as the result of this incident. Safety and Enforcement Division (SED) found that the incident was caused by SoCalGas' employee failure to follow SoCalGas' Gas Standards. Therefore, SED finds SoCalGas in violation of General Order (GO) 112-F, Reference Title 49 Code of Federal regulation (CFR), Part 192, §192.605(a) for failure to pot-hole, use hand-tools within the tolerance zone, and have a "stand-by" person while performing the excavation within ten (10) feet of the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main.

**Casualties:** *Fatalities:* 0 *Injuries:* 0

**Property Damage:** \$104,266.00

**Utility Facilities involved:**

Pipe Material = Steel, Pipe Size = 4 (inches), MAOP = 175 (psi), Operating Pressure = 170 (psi)

**Witnesses:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Phone</i>
1 Desmond Lew	CPUC Investigator	N/A
2 Ali Matin	Pipeline Safety and Complia	(909) 919-0463
3 Jeff Weldon	Construction Team Lead	

**Evidence:**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Description</i>
1 Ali Matin	420 Initial Report dated May 7, 2020
2 Ali Matin	PHMSA F7100.1 Report dated June 5, 2020
3 Jeff Weldon	Phone Interview on May 11, 2020

**Observations and Findings:**

On May 5, 2020, at approximately 1050 hours, Jeff D. Weldon, SoCalGas' backhoe operator was excavating for a service abandonment project when he hit and damaged the service tee on the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main resulting in gas release into the atmosphere. There were no injuries, fatalities, fire, or third-party damage as the result of this incident. The incident became reportable to both CPUC and DOT due to gas release and cost of repairs exceeding \$50,000.

On May 8, 2020, at 1429 hours, Ali Matin, SoCalGas' representative submitted the 420 report. This report provided details on the time the leak was stopped and when permanent repairs were completed. On June 5, 2020, at 1143 hours, Mr. Matin submitted PHMSA F 7100.1 Incident Report - Gas Distribution System, along with photos of the damaged SoCalGas' facilities and a copy of USA Ticket Number X012200988. The report states that SoCalGas failed to use hand tools as required to locate the underground gas facilities. The total estimated property damage is \$101,248 and the cost of gas released is \$3,018. The photos show the damaged gas facilities. A copy of Leak Repair Order #520002404509, dated May 5, 2020, was provided stating the repairs consisted of welding pressure control fittings onto the main.

On May 11, 2020, SED interviewed Jeff D. Weldon, SoCalGas' backhoe operator/ Line Locator/Lead Construction Technician who was assigned this service abandonment project. Mr. Weldon stated that the USA Ticket was valid at the time

of the incident and he used SoCalGas' Gas Standard 184.0200 – Underground Service Alert and Temporary Marking to locate and mark SoCalGas' underground facilities including the service tee and the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main. In addition, Mr. Weldon stated that while he was operating the backhoe to expose the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main, he hit and damaged the service tee on the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main. Furthermore, Mr. Weldon stated that he did not pot-hole to determine the exact location of the SoCalGas' subsurface installations.

1. GO 112-F, Reference Title 49 of CFR, Part 192, §192.605(a) states in part:

“General. Each operator shall prepare and follow for each pipeline, a manual of written procedures for conducting operations and maintenance activities and for emergency response. For transmission lines, the manual must also include procedures for handling abnormal operations. This manual must be reviewed and updated by the operator at intervals not exceeding 15 months, but at least one each calendar year. This manual must be prepared before operations of a pipeline system commence. Appropriate parts of the manual must be kept at locations where operations and maintenance activities are conducted.”

1.1 SoCalGas Gas Standard 184.0200 Underground Service Alert and Temporary Marking, Section 7.11.1 states:

“The excavator is required to dig (pot-hole) with hand tools (see definitions section) within the “tolerance zone” to locate subsurface installations in conflict with the excavation. The “tolerance zone” does not refer to depth.”

1.2 SoCalGas Gas Standard 184.0200 Underground Service Alert and Temporary Marking, Section 13 Appendices reference Appendix A California One-Call Law – California Government Code (CGC) Section 4216. §4216.4(a)(1) states:

“Except as provided in paragraph (2), if an excavation is within the tolerance zone of a subsurface installation, the excavator shall determine the exact location of the subsurface installation in conflict with the excavation using hand tools before using any power-driven excavation or boring equipment within the tolerance zone of the subsurface installations. In all cases the excavator shall use reasonable care to prevent damaging subsurface installations.”

1.3 SoCalGas Gas Standard 184.09 Prevention of Excavation Damage to Company Subsurface Installations, Section 6.1.1 states:

“Stand-by during the periods of know excavation causing exposure or possible exposure within ten (10) feet of high priority (greater than 60psig) subsurface installations.”

SED investigation found that SoCalGas' employee failed to follow SoCalGas' Gas Standard 184.0200 for conducting excavation activities including pot-holing and

using hand tools to determine the exact location of the subsurface installation within the tolerance zone before using a power driven equipment (backhoe). In addition, SED found SoCalGas' employee failed to follow SoCalGas' Gas Standard 184.09 and request for a "stand-by" person while excavating within ten (10) feet of the high priority subsurface installations (4-inch high pressure steel gas main with MAOP of 175 psig and MOP of 170 psig). Therefore, SED finds SoCalGas in violation of GO 112-F, Reference title 49 CFR, Part 192, Section 192.605(a) for failure to pot-hole, use hand-tools within the tolerance zone, and have a "stand-by" person while performing the excavation within ten (10) feet of the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main.

**Preliminary Statement of Pertinent General Order, Public Utilities Code Requirements, and/or Federal Requirements:**

*General Order*

*GO Rule*

1 GO112F

Title 49 of CFR Part 192, Section 192.605(a)

**Conclusion:**

Based on the investigation, SED found that SoCalGas' employee failed to follow SoCalGas' Gas Standard 184,0200 for conducting excavation activities including pot-holing and using hand tools to determine the exact location of the subsurface installation within the tolerance zone before using a power driven equipment (backhoe). In addition, SED found SoCalGas' employee failed to follow SoCalGas' Gas Standard 184.09 and request for a "stand-by" person while excavating within ten (10) of high priority subsurface installations (4-inch high pressure steel gas main with MAOP of 175 psig and MOP of 170 psig). Therefore, SED finds SoCalGas in violation of GO 112-F, Reference title 49 CFR, Part 192, Section 192.605(a) for failure to pot-hole, use hand-tools within the tolerance zone, and have a "stand-by" while performing the excavation within ten (10) feet of the 4-inch high pressure steel gas main.