

Sent via ELECTRONIC MAIL to

digboard@energysafety.ca.gov

September 3, 2025

Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety  
Attn: Jaime Hastings, Underground Infrastructure Directorate  
715 P Street, 15th Floor  
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Comment Letter – GIS Regulatory Language Public Comments

Ms. Hastings,

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to California Underground Safety Board (Board) on the proposed pre-rulemaking language related to GIS requirements for new underground installations (proposed language). ACWA represents approximately 470 public water agencies that supply water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses to over 90 percent of California's population.

ACWA and our members are supportive of the work of the Board as our members have faced many situations where underground installations have been damaged by bad actors. ACWA member agencies typically maintain significant underground infrastructure for the purposes of supplying and transporting water across the state. For example, one of our medium size retail water agency members has over 900 miles of underground infrastructure. Given the impact this proposed rulemaking could have on our membership, we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

By way of background, in 2020, ACWA engaged with former Senator Hill's office on Senate Bill 865, which appears to be the underlying authority for this proposed rulemaking. ACWA did not adopt a formal position on the bill at that time but did provide significant technical assistance on the ability of water agencies to maintain different levels of accuracy in GIS data. During our discussions with Senator Hill's office, we focused, in relevant part, on the following aspects of SB 865: the use of the term "geographic information systems" (GIS), the scope of that term, and the tolerance/accuracy of the collected GIS data. Because ACWA only became aware of this proposed rulemaking very recently, our comments on the proposed language are necessarily less detailed. However, we would like to highlight certain areas of the proposed language where we may have concern or feedback and look forward to providing more detailed feedback following the close of the comment period on September 3, 2025.

Modify Geospatial Coordinates Definition and Requirement

The proposed language would add a definition of "Geospatial coordinates." Both the use of this specific term, and the definition itself, would seem to indicate a requirement akin to global positioning system (GPS) coordinates. When SB 865 was moving through the legislative process,

ACWA specifically asked that the language in statute refer to GIS data systems and data collected through a GIS data system. GPS data may or may not be able to be collected by some of our agencies. This same concern was shared by other industries during negotiations on SB 865, and the language that was ultimately enacted in Government Code section 4216.3 was very carefully drafted to ensure all parties could meet the standard. Based on the intent of the bill in 2020, ACWA would ask that this definition be modified to more accurately reflect the legislative requirement to collect GIS data.

#### Adjust Required Accuracy of Collected Data

One of the more challenging discussion points during the negotiations on SB 865 was the accuracy of the data collected in the GIS information for new installations. Statute defines a tolerance zone (Government Code section 4216(u)) at 24 inches. At certain points in the legislative process, there was consideration of including a requirement that the accuracy of GIS information be within the tolerance zone. Ultimately, Senator Hill's office did not add this requirement because of technical feedback from our membership and other stakeholders that this may not be technically feasible.

The requirement in the proposed regulatory language is for the accuracy of GIS data to be within 100 mm. An accuracy of 100 mm, or less than four inches, is significantly more stringent than the statutory definition of tolerance zone, and therefore significantly more stringent than what was considered and later discarded as a technically infeasible requirement in the legislative process. ACWA and our members were not the only stakeholders that raised this concern during the legislative process. ACWA would ask the Board to reconsider this requirement and instead work with stakeholders on a requirement that is technically feasible.

#### Clarify Definition of New Subsurface Installation

The proposed language would require any new underground facility, installed replacement, or "major" repair to meet these new GIS requirements. This definition is somewhat open to interpretation and ACWA would support a definition that is clearer for those that need to comply. Perhaps for replacement of infrastructure there could be a measurement threshold (e.g., more than a certain number of feet of underground equipment). This is an area of the proposed regulations that was not considered during the legislative process, and ACWA would need to discuss this further within its membership to determine a final recommendation for the Board to consider.

#### Other Issues and Recommendations

ACWA is unable to provide any comment at this time on the proposed areas related to "component and attribute records" or metadata records. After the close of the current comment period, we can more thoroughly engage our membership and provide more comprehensive feedback on these proposed components of the regulations.

It is also unclear whether these requirements would apply to all "operators" as defined in statute, or only to public agencies. If these requirements would only apply to public agencies there could be gaps in data between private land developers and utilities that later take over those facilities developed by private interests (e.g., a water treatment system). ACWA would support these requirements applying to all operators, as defined.

ACWA would welcome further conversations with the Board and staff to provide additional technical input, and we appreciate consideration of these initial comments. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the comments, please contact Julia Hall at [Juliah@acwa.com](mailto:Juliah@acwa.com) or (530) 902-9746.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Bishop Hall  
State Legislative Director  
Association of California Water Agencies