

1. What exactly qualifies as an "emergency" now?

One of the most critical changes is the addition of the word "**existing**" to the definition of essential utility services. The full definition is a **sudden or unforeseen event** involving a **clear and imminent danger to life, health, or property**; the **interruption of essential existing utility services**; or the **blockage of transportation facilities**, including highway, rail, water and air, which **requires immediate action**

- **Question:** "Can I still submit an emergency ticket to set up a new service line for a customer who needs it immediately?"
- **Answer: No.** Emergency tickets cannot be used for new service installations; they must involve an interruption to an **existing** essential utility.

2. What are the new 3-hour response requirements?

The new law establishes strict timeframes for both the person digging and the utility owner.

- **Question:** "What happens if I place an emergency ticket, but my crew is stuck in traffic and can't get there right away?"
- **Answer:** The person responsible for the excavation must be **on-site, en route, or in active communication** with the operator through the Positive Response system within **three hours**. Similarly, member operators must respond in the Positive Response system within **three hours** of receiving the notification.

3. How is a "false emergency" defined and reported?

Because the system allows authorized users to submit emergency tickets online without additional verification from the notification center, there are new penalties for abuse.

- **Question:** "If I suspect a contractor is using emergency tickets for routine work to skip the waiting period, how do I report it?"
- **Answer:** Making a false claim of an emergency is now a **statutory violation**. These must be reported through [complaint form](#) on the SC811 website for enforcement action, which could result in fines of up to **\$5,000**.

4. Does an emergency declaration change my liability?

- **Question:** "If I dig during an emergency and hit a line that wasn't marked within the three-hour window, am I still responsible for the damage?"

- **Answer:** The law states that declaring an emergency **does not relieve any party of liability** for causing damage to an operator's facilities, even if those facilities were unmarked.

5. What are the immediate reporting steps if damage occurs?

The process for reporting damage during an emergency has been formalized.

- **Question:** "If I hit a line during an emergency repair, do I just tell the utility company, or do I need to call it in?"
- **Answer:** You must **immediately** report the damage to **both** SC811 and the facility operator. If the damage results in the escape of gas, electricity, or hazardous liquids, or otherwise endangers life, you must **immediately notify 911**.