

Published July 17th, 2013

Precarious Gas Meter Needs Security

Utility's program aims to remedy the situation

By Cathy Tyson



Gas meters like this one in Orinda could qualify for PG&E's Meter Protection Program. Photo Andy Scheck

A potentially dangerous gas meter was spotted on a windy road in Orinda, located within a few feet of a narrow winding roadway, coming out of the ground not anchored to anything. It wouldn't take much if a driver lost control to crash into it, with possibly horrific consequences.

With images from the devastating San Bruno disaster fairly fresh, Pacific Gas and Electric Company was very helpful and promptly clarified the situation and what could be done about it – for this meter and others that are similarly situated in Lamorinda.

Located on El Toyonal, this precarious gas meter could be a candidate for PG&E's Meter Protection Program, which seeks to identify gas meters that are too close to a road. "Safety is our top priority," said Tamar Sarkissian, spokesperson for PG&E. She explained that in this situation, the first step is to send a field inspector out to evaluate the location of the gas meter, relative to the roadway.

The curb matters. PG&E's regulations state that physical protection shall be provided for any gas meter within 3 feet of the following: driveway or roadway with a curb, in addition if a road, street, alley or driveway without a curb is within 8 feet of the gas meter, it can also be a candidate for the meter protection program.

That protection usually means installing bollards – strong steel poles – at PG&E's expense. If that is not possible PG&E is required to move the meter, also on their dime, but the customer would be responsible for hiring a plumber to reconnect the line from the new location of the meter to the home.

That's where Maurice Williams, owner of LeapFrog Plumbing comes in; while he does all kinds of plumbing work, he's also been in the trenches with PG&E. "In my experience they have been extremely proactive," said Williams. He's been personally involved in a number of gas meter issues with the utility and notes that sometimes they get a "bad rap" that is undeserved – on the contrary, they've been very generous taking care of gas line concerns.

To get more information on the Meter Protection Program, or to see if your meter qualifies, call PG&E's main number at (800) PGE-5000. As a reminder, it's important for homeowners, contractors and excavators to call before digging to identify the location of underground gas lines. Underground Service Alert is a free service; simply call 811.





This over build gas meter in Lafayette qualified for PG&E's Meter Protection Program. Photos courtesy Leapfrog Plumbing

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