

# Fresno gas line had no leaks before exploding near Highway 99, PG&E says

By Andrea Castillo



Pacific Gas & Electric Co. released this photo of the area where the natural gas line was ruptured Friday, April 17, 2015. PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC CO.

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A natural gas line that exploded Friday near Highway 99 in northwest Fresno was inspected twice in April and found to have no gas leaks, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. said Sunday.

Spokesman Denny Boyles said PG&E crews conducted a ground survey April 1 and an aerial survey April 16. The pipeline was also surveyed in 2013, showing it was covered by 40 inches of dirt.



The line was clearly marked when a heavy equipment operator apparently nicked it, which sparked the [fiery blast that injured 13 people](#). The operator was subcontracted from the city's public works department to move dirt into a mound behind targets at the Fresno County Sheriff's Foundation gun range to keep bullets in.

Boyles said the company was never notified that the county intended to dig near the 12-inch transmission line at the gun range. PG&E detected a pressure drop in the line six or seven minutes before they got the first call about the explosion, he said.

Fresno County Sheriff's Office spokesman Tony Botti said Sunday that three jail inmates injured in the blast remained in critical but stable condition, another two inmates were in stable condition and the public works employee was in critical condition at Community Regional Medical Center. Another jail inmate who was being treated at Madera Community Hospital on Saturday has been released and is back in the jail, he said.

On Sunday, investigators with the California Public Utilities Commission continued to examine the blast area to determine what happened and why. Separate investigations also are under way by the Fresno Fire Department, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office and the county public works department. Boyles said he expects repairs to take at least two weeks.

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