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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Examine Electric Utility De-Energization of Power Lines in Dangerous Conditions.	Rulemaking 18-12-005 (Filed December 13, 2018)

JOINT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSES TO COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS FILED ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

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Dated: October 15, 2019

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In accordance with the Assigned Commissioner's Phase 2 Scoping Memo and Ruling, and Administrative Law Judge Semcer's October 8, 2019 email ruling, the Counties of Mendocino, Napa, Santa Barbara, and Sonoma, and the City of Santa Rosa (the Joint Local Governments) submit their opening comments on the parties' proposals addressing the issues identified for Track 1 in the Scoping Ruling.[1] Mendocino, Napa, and Sonoma obtained party status in the first phase of this proceeding by filing comments on the Rulemaking; Santa Rosa obtained party status in ALJ Semcer's March 20, 2019 email ruling; Santa Barbara filed a motion for party status on October 4, 2019. While the discussion of specific de-energization issues in these comments largely addresses PG&E's PSPS program, the recommended improvements to communication, coordination, and the overall de-energization protocols are also applicable to Southern California Edison's PSPS program.

[1] The Joint Local Governments are served by PG&E and SCE; these comments therefore focus on the PSPS programs for those utilities.

I. OPENING COMMENTS

The Joint Local Governments submit these comments against the backdrop of PG&E's unprecedented October 9 de-energization, which brought national attention to PG&E's continued failure to develop and implement an effective de-energization program. While the Joint Local Governments and their counsel have carefully maintained in this proceeding (and in all other proceedings relating to PG&E and wildfire prevention) a measured and unemotional tone, the latest events show how little gain has come from a long effort to improve PG&E's de-energization practices and warrant an expression of outrage.

PG&E's Track 1 comments show a surprising complacency for a utility whose failings are manifold and public. The comments illustrate the utility's deeply ingrained institutional resistance to change and inability to sacrifice familiar (but ineffective) processes for new practices recommended by veteran emergency management experts. The Joint Local Governments have raised PG&E's shortcomings and provided guidance for effective coordination with public safety partners to the Commission and to the utility repeatedly and consistently since the beginning of this Rulemaking. The Commission has heard us, but PG&E has not. The experience of working with PG&E to effect real changes to its de-energization program has been like battling the Hydra: no sooner do we meet with PG&E personnel who ostensibly understand our concerns and commit to making improvements than a different PG&E employee tells us, for example, that local emergency managers will not be informed of the location of Community Resource Centers before they are announced to the public, or that PG&E is too busy with its internal PSPS readiness to provide the outage information local emergency managers need to prepare their community for de-energization until after the 2019 fire season, or that a local government liaison can only be "embedded" in PG&E's EOC by sitting alone in a conference room separated from the EOC by three security gates.

As for the October 9 event, PG&E started the shut-down prematurely (including a 24-hour period where the winds did not reach threatening levels), de-energized an area far too broad to correspond to the actual danger, and inadequately discharged its obligation to ensure vulnerable citizens would be protected from the effects of the shut-down. While none of the affected counties or cities had direct access to the corporate offices where the decisions regarding scope and timing of the outage were made, the way PG&E implemented the PSPS supports the inference that the utility's primary goal was protecting itself from liability, and that considerations of the resulting human and economic damage were, if examined at all, secondary. It is also clear that PG&E has no idea what it is doing when it comes to de-energization and is terrified. The lack of confidence PG&E has in its infrastructure is certainly apparent.

This has got to stop. PG&E has been offered all the emergency management resources and information it needs to build an effective de-energization program, and its responses at every turn have included messages such as: "There are too many local governments to work with you directly. You want too much information. It is too hard. Our service territory is too big." The fact that PG&E has a huge service territory and millions of customers cannot be the reason that PG&E is unable to meet its communities' needs. The Joint Local Governments do acknowledge that PG&E has made some improvements, and we have seen from certain PG&E staff what we believe is a good-faith desire to understand what its local public safety partners need; we commend those efforts and hope to continue working to improve PG&E's practices. But PG&E as a whole continues to fail us. The Commission has an opportunity in the second phase of this proceeding to order meaningful changes to PG&E's de-energization program. The Joint Local Governments ask that the Commission seize that opportunity.

1. Lessons Learned: PG&E's October 9 PSPS

While the Joint Local Governments will submit separate comments in response to PG&E's after-action report for the October 9, 2019 de-energization, this preliminary discussion of the event will provide the context in which the remainder of the Joint Local Governments' comments should be read. As the *New York Times* quoted in the title of its October 12 article on the de-energization, "[t]his did not go well."[2]

At the outset, the Joint Local Governments strongly recommend that PG&E ask a CalFire Type 1 Incident Management Team to review the October 9 PSPS, soup to nuts, and build a de-energization operations plan for PG&E. All of the information-sharing, coordination, timing, and communication failures that PG&E continues to suffer are avoidable with the right plan. PG&E's de-energization plan, which it appears to have developed *deus ex machina*, while failing to take advantage of the input from a plethora of qualified emergency management agencies that could serve as resources, is not up to the task.

a. Notification and Communication Problems

(1) Website

PG&E's PSPS website went down shortly after the event was announced and never fully recovered. PG&E is aware of this failure and has acknowledged it. But the fact remains that PG&E appears not to have planned for the most predictable realities of a massive de-energization, despite its repeated cautions to the public that any and all parts of its system are fair game for PSPS. The website failure is particularly problematic because PG&E's mantra for sharing PSPS information has been "Check the website. The information you need will be on the website." Instead of complying with the Commission's orders to make real-time weather and

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/12/business/pge-california-outage.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage.

fire-threat modeling information available directly to local public safety partners, which is information the Joint Local Governments have repeatedly lobbied for at the Commission and in direct discussions with PG&E, the utility created two public websites to share a seven-day PSPS outlook and outage maps with local governments.[3] The websites were of dubious use in and of themselves, but were completely useless when they could not be accessed. Not only was PG&E's website meltdown a failure to plan ahead and a massive inconvenience, but it placed the public at risk. Individuals who require time, planning, and assistance to leave their homes for a location with electricity have to know whether they will lose power and when, and to have some assurance that the location they intend to go to has power.

(2) Notification and Information-Sharing Problems

PG&E appears not to understand the structure and the role of the local governments it serves. The Joint Local Governments have struggled to get PG&E to understand that the local government itself—its emergency managers, health departments, first responders, and other departments—are not the same as the general public, and therefore require different communication and information than the general public. Local governments are involved in protecting the safety and wellbeing of their residents, which means PG&E must provide detailed information to local emergency managers *before* it provides outage alerts and information to the public. Local governments will not be able to ensure resources are available for the public when they learn of the impending outage, and will not be able to answer the questions that flood into their emergency call centers, if PG&E does not provide the information in advance. Despite explaining this to PG&E repeatedly, in many respects the Joint Local Governments were still treated as members of the general public by PG&E during the October 9 event. For example,

[3] See Joint Local Governments' Motion for Rejection of PG&E Advice Letter 4117-G/5582-E, R.18-10-007, pp. 4–6 (filed October 14, 2019).

PG&E employees insisted that local governments would not be informed of the locations of Community Resource Centers until the locations were announced to the public. This policy ignores the fact that local governments must set up CRCs for their residents if PG&E does not.

PG&E's lack of understanding also manifested in its communication with school districts, which are generally separate special districts that have their own boards, budgets, and governance. The PG&E liaisons responsible for communicating with the school districts in Napa and Sonoma Counties, for instance, were not well informed enough to provide the information necessary for the school districts to know if they would lose power; it appears that PG&E has not established PSPS web portal access for the school districts, either. The result was that local emergency managers had to work with the school districts, using the outage maps provided by PG&E, to try to determine if specific schools would be de-energized.

Had PG&E provided its local public safety partners with the list of potentially affected critical facilities, instead of holding publicly available information back subject to execution of a nondisclosure agreement,[4] the schools and the local emergency managers would have known immediately which schools were likely to lose power.

(3) Community Resource Centers

PG&E had an executed agreement with the County of Napa to use the County fairgrounds as a CRC site in Calistoga. During the October 9 PSPS, PG&E did not contact Napa County's EOC (or anyone else that the County is aware of) about setting up a CRC closer to the City of Napa. PG&E instead set up a CRC for affected residents in the City of Napa and surrounding areas in Vallejo. Vallejo is approximately 15 miles down Highway 29, a journey that would have required traversing a number of intersections without working traffic lights. Napa County had arranged for a CRC location close to the City of Napa, which PG&E failed to

[4] See further discussion at pp. 21–23, *infra*.

pursue, and set up its own CRCs, at its own expense, which hundreds if impacted residents used. The County is at a loss to understand PG&E's decision regarding this specific CRC and is further unable to comprehend PG&E's resistance to working with local governments to site and establish CRCs. Over the last six months, the County has suggested multiple options for CRC sites to PG&E that would be accessible to residents; PG&E has not followed up on any of the County's suggestions.

Going forward, PG&E must partner with the communities in which it plans to site CRCs to ensure that the locations are accessible and rational in light of local conditions. PG&E must also communicate with local governments regarding CRCs during a de-energization, instead of unilaterally deciding when and where to establish a CRC.

(4) Outage Maps

PG&E apparently overstates the outage area by 20% in the shapefiles it provides directly to its public safety partners through the secure PSPS web portal. After struggling to reconcile the outage boundaries in the shapefiles with the other outage information PG&E was providing, the Joint Local Governments discovered that PG&E builds in a 20% "margin" to the shapefiles. Based on the "search by address" function on PG&E's PSPS website, which functioned enough to allow Napa County to determine that the shapefiles were inaccurate, it is clear that PG&E knows the actual outage boundaries but does not provide that information in the shapefiles. Santa Rosa learned of the buffer from a PG&E employee. The result of this exercise in liability avoidance (the only explanation the Joint Local Governments can muster) is that the local governments' emergency managers spent time and resources preparing for outages in buildings that PG&E knew were not expected to lose power. Before Napa discovered the discrepancy between the actual outage area and the shapefile maps, the County's Corrections Director was preparing to evacuate the County jail, which was located in the 20% buffer zone.

Had the extra margin not been discovered, the County would have expended significant financial and personnel resources on an unnecessary evacuation.

PG&E did not, to the Joint Local Governments' knowledge, directly acknowledge that its outage map shapefiles were 20% larger than the actual impacted areas. Admitting to that would have been extremely helpful to the impacted cities and counties because they could have adjusted their review of PG&E's materials and deployed resources accordingly. PG&E instead admitted on one or more of the status report calls that its outage maps weren't reliable, and recommended that the local emergency managers and first responders on the calls use the website address search function instead. The website that crashed repeatedly and for extended periods of time.

The Joint Local Governments also note that the PG&E liaisons assigned to the local EOCs had their own outage maps on their personal electronic devices, based on PG&E's own internal information, that appeared to be accurate. Why PG&E did not provide those maps to its public safety partners is unfathomable.

Going forward, PG&E must provide outage maps that only reflect the expected outage area. Building in a 20% margin of error is unnecessary and unacceptable.

(5) Conference Calls with Affected Agencies

It was abundantly clear during the October 9 de-energization that PG&E has never thought to sit down with emergency managers at agencies that manage huge fires and other disasters to learn how to handle a situation involving a large number of affected entities. It is possible to have in-person meetings with 150 people representing multiple stakeholders, and to have conference calls with dozens of stakeholders and more than 100 participants, and to run those meetings smoothly and quickly. The Joint Local Governments have sat in those meetings

and participated in those calls. By contrast, the status calls PG&E held three times a day during the October 9 PSPS were poorly structured, badly managed, and ineffective.

First, the attendance roster for affected entities requires some common sense. It is not necessary or useful to have entities whose power is not scheduled to be cut until the following day on the same call as entities who have been de-energized for 24 hours or more. Their informational needs are very different and should be addressed in different venues. In professional emergency management, this structure is referred to as "area command."

Second, the format of the calls changed every time. Different information was provided at different times in a different manner, and the structure of the calls was never consistent. The call-in numbers and passcodes changed regularly, as well, sometimes as close as 15 or 20 minutes before the call.

Third, there was no visual component. Successful agency information sessions involve a WebEx or other visual presentation, in addition to the audio portion. CalFire and other emergency management agencies are well-versed in these types of meetings; PG&E should adopt those practices immediately.

Fourth, PG&E management should stop running the calls. PG&E needs to put an operations person in charge of the calls. The focus of the meeting should be conveying practical information in a direct manner. Management so far has not been able to do so.

Fifth, affected agencies should be required to send questions in writing before the all-hands conference calls. Only the questions that are applicable to a broad section of the participants should be addressed during the calls/WebEx. The questions relevant to individual entities or a smaller group should be answered directly and offline. This is how CalFire and other professional emergency management agencies run their informational calls.

Sixth, it was clear over the course of the outage that PG&E wanted to limit the number participants on the daily situation update calls. This was attempted through shuffling of call-in numbers and access codes, at least one call where only county OES staff were allowed to ask questions, and at least one call where three-county "queues" were established for asking questions and the two counties waiting in the queue could not hear the questions asked by the first county or PG&E's answers. During the phase where PG&E attempted to limit participants by claiming insufficient bandwidth on its conference lines (hence the shuffling numbers), a PG&E employee observed to the Joint Local Governments that PG&E has conference calling capabilities to handle hundreds of participants on a single line; PG&E simply chose not to use it.

b. Embedding Local Liaisons in PG&E's EOC

PG&E's practice for "embedding" local liaisons in its EOC is a dismal failure. Sonoma County has sent liaisons to PG&E's EOC during the September 25 de-energization and the October 9 event—and is the only local government to have done so thus far. Sonoma's representatives were given short tours of the EOC and were allowed to sit in on the daily Operational Area calls with the impacted local governments, but were otherwise placed in a separate conference room separated from the EOC by three security gates. There was no video or audio feed, or any other direct access to PG&E's EOC, in the conference room. Sonoma's representatives were assigned a PG&E liaison, who endeavored to be as helpful as PG&E's setup allowed, but the fact remains that Sonoma could not ask any questions directly to the EOC; everything was relayed through the liaison. The end result was that Sonoma was no better informed about PG&E's decisionmaking or the factors influencing the ongoing PSPS, than if the representative had not traveled to PG&E's EOC at all. This is unacceptable.

PG&E claims that capacity in its EOC and technical/legal/regulatory limitations restricted its ability to allow Sonoma's full access to information and data-sharing in the EOC.

The facts suggest otherwise. Sonoma observed open workstations in the EOC during the September 25 event, and while the EOC was more heavily populated during the October 9 event, Sonoma was the only local government of the 34 affected counties that sent a representative. Given that multiple newspapers obviously had photographers in PG&E's EOC during the October 9 event, the Joint Local Governments venture that PG&E could have accommodated Sonoma if it wanted to. As for the alleged technical, legal, or regulatory limitations, Sonoma was not asked to sign a nondisclosure agreement before its tour of the EOC, to cover the times when the County was allowed to sit in on the Operational Area calls, or to cover any additional information provided by Sonoma's PG&E liaison; the Joint Local Governments are not aware of any type of information that becomes proprietary only with prolonged exposure. The Joint Local Governments also note that PG&E's liaisons have full access to the local EOCs, and all the information, maps, discussions, and activity that comes with an operational EOC.

It is also necessary to note that, while PG&E refuses to allow a local government representative in its EOC, representatives from the CPUC, CalOES, and possibly other state or federal agencies have full access to PG&E's EOC. As the Joint Local Governments explained at length in their Track 1 proposals, emergency management is bottom-up, not top-down. That means that PG&E is not allowing the entities with primary responsibility for responding to the PSPS and for ensuring the safety of the public (who are PG&E's customers) into the PSPS decisionmaking nerve center. But the agencies that only provide support and resources—when necessary—to the local governments have full access. This is an absurd state of affairs.

PG&E's protestations about the hurdles to allowing an impacted local government representative to embed in its EOC ring hollow. Though PG&E repeatedly explained to Sonoma that it had never done this before, the excuse only works for the first visit, not the second or

third. Going forward, PG&E must allow local liaisons *in* their EOC for the duration of an event, should the local government wish it.

c. Medically Vulnerable Customers

In addition to the shortcomings of PG&E's medical baseline customer information and information-sharing protocols, which are addressed below in detail, the Joint Local Governments observed a number of on-the-ground impacts to PG&E's medically vulnerable customers. Napa County's Health and Human Services and emergency services departments received many calls from medically fragile individuals, a large number of which related to oxygen compressors that needed three to six hours to charge, a shortage of oxygen refills from supply companies that were unable to ship to the customers on time, a lack of long-term sleeping facilities for CPAP customers whose equipment must be plugged into a wall overnight, and a shortfall in services or assistance for non-mobile elderly individuals who were unable to transport themselves to charging stations. The County also received calls from independent living facilities, which are essentially apartment complexes that house elderly people. While the residents are generally self-sufficient and mobile, when the power goes out and the elevators stop working, a number of residents become house-bound. These people did not have needs that, at the time they called, fit the definition of a medical emergency, but they had logistical needs that—only if met—would prevent their conditions from becoming medical emergencies. That is a fine line that erodes quickly when the power is out for extended periods of time. Skilled nursing facilities are required to have backup generation, while assisted living facilities may have different (or no) backup generation requirements, and independent living facilities are not required to have any backup power. These real-life impacts on medically vulnerable customers are a significant factor in the Joint Local Governments' push for utility-

provided resources to ensure that vulnerable customers are cared for, which is discussed in detail in Section 3 below.

d. Re-Energization and Flexibility of PG&E's System

PG&E has never, to the Joint Local Governments' knowledge, admitted to any flexibility in its ability to de- or re-energize targeted sections of its system. To the contrary, PG&E tends to give the impression that its hands are tied once the power is off, or if a certain circuit or transmission line needs to be shut down, that its system is not constructed to be nimble and segmented, and, in any event, the threatening weather has to subside before re-energization can even be discussed. And yet the Joint Local Governments observed a surprising level of precision in PG&E's de-energization and selective re-energization of large facilities during the October 9 event. In Napa County, for example, Yountville, which is the location of a large veteran's home, and the Napa State Hospital retained power. Several large customers in the North Bay were also re-energized before the larger area was brought back online. And PG&E manually re-energized the Butte County jail after the County informed PG&E on a conference call that the facility had been de-energized. While the Joint Local Governments do not know the details of PG&E's system or how these targeted de- and re-energizations were possible—because PG&E has never shared that information—it is apparent that PG&E has a good deal more flexibility in its system that it would have us believe.

The lack of transparency into PG&E's de- and re-energization flexibility is not only problematic from an information-sharing perspective, but it calls into question PG&E's stance that it is unable to alter the course of a PSPS once the event is set in motion. Months ago, the Joint Local Governments asked PG&E whether it would be able to restore power if a de-energized area experienced an emergency, like a wildfire, to ensure that the public safety response was supported by electricity. PG&E's answer was "No." The only circumstances

under which PG&E could or would restore power, the local governments were told, was if the threatening weather had subsided and "it was safe to do so." That response is unacceptable, particularly when water systems need electricity to function and when gas-powered generators are a significant fire risk. PG&E must provide more transparency into its de- and re-energization capabilities, and it *must* have a better plan for addressing wildfires and other emergencies that start during a de-energization than refusing to turn the power on until the wind has subsided.

e. Outage Duration and Potential Impacts

For as inexpertly executed, frustrating, financially and medically harmful, and long as the October 9 de-energization was, PG&E and its customers are fortunate that it was not worse. Had the outage lasted another 24 hours, in the Joint Local Governments' emergency managers' estimation, PG&E could have seen as many customer deaths as in the 2017 and 2018 wildfires. Toward the end of the outage, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other facilities that provide care to vulnerable individuals were nearing the limits of their backup power. As the PSPS wore on into the early hours of October 10 in the North Bay, with signs that the cellular networks, VoIP, and broadband internet were quickly degrading, veteran fire fighters and emergency managers feared that if a fire broke out, their best tool for warning and evacuating the public—Wireless Emergency Alert—would be significantly hampered or even useless. It is too early to know how many water systems, both large-scale and individual wells, were inoperable due to the outage. The Joint Local Governments expect that many stories of near-misses and closely averted disasters will emerge in the coming weeks.

When a more complete accounting of the actual and potential impacts of the October 9 event is possible, the Joint Local Governments urge the Commission to take a hard look at the aspects of PG&E's de-energization program that are inflexible, that do not account for on-the-ground impacts, and that in fact exacerbate the problems created by de-energization.

The Commission should ensure that PG&E excises those aspects of its program and develops as better one under the supervision of experienced emergency managers.

2. Definitions/Standard Nomenclature

At the outset, the Joint Local Governments agree with the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) that focusing on the terminology used to describe aspects of de-energization events is not as important as ensuring that the utilities have effective plans and protocols for communicating with critical facilities, local governments, access and functional needs (AFN) populations, and other customers.[5] The best terminology in the world will not be worth much if the utility is unable to act on it or to provide useful information in connection with it. To the extent that clarifying certain terms will improve the utilities' communication and outreach efforts, however, the Joint Local Governments support those changes.

c. Are there any differences among the [IOUs'] medical baseline tariffs and medical baseline designations that should be updated to promote consistency across utilities for the PSPS programs?

PG&E's and SCE's medical baseline website information and registration forms are not perfectly aligned, which creates difficulties in relying on the programs for emergency response planning, particularly for Santa Barbara County, which is served by both utilities. SCE's medical baseline registration form requests information regarding: the customer's use of electrically operated medical devices; whether the patient is under hospice care; whether the patient has heating and cooling needs, and whether that need is temporary or permanent; and the amount of time the customer can be without power before their medical equipment fails.[6] While SCE's form contains only five information categories, the information is granular enough to be

[5] RCRC Comments on Phase 2, Track 1, pp. 3–4, 5, 6, 7
[6] Available at: https://www.sce.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/Med%20Baseline%20App%20REV%201-19%20English.pdf

useful to local government emergency managers and health services providers during a de-energization.[7] PG&E's medical baseline form, by contrast, asks only whether the customer requires the use of a life support device and whether the customer has heating and cooling needs.[8] As a result of this binary designation, the medical baseline customer information that was provided to the Joint Local Governments' Offices of Emergency Services was not helpful and did not give local jurisdictions the opportunity to use that data to stratify notifications to residents based on life support equipment needs.[9] At a minimum, PG&E's registration form should be revised to match SCE's and SDG&E's forms.

SCE appears to use the term "critical care customer" separately from "medical baseline customer."[10] It is not clear whether the terms are intended to be synonymous, whether critical care customers are those whose medical providers have indicated they cannot be without power for more than two hours, or whether some other criteria warrant the designation. If local governments are to receive the utilities' medical baseline customer information during a de-energization, that distinction will be crucial. SCE should clarify its terminology.

d. What nomenclature should the Commission adopt to describe the various periods of a PSPS event (i.e., the period during which the IOU has formed its [EOC] but has not yet de-energized power lines, the period during which power is shut off, the re-energization period[,] and the post-event time period)

The terms used to describe the various phases of a de-energization event must not be conflated with the type of information and notification the utilities provide, or the cadence at

[7] SDG&E's registration form is essentially identical to SCE's: https://www.sdge.com/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL_S1660099_SDGE_MBL_App_Eng.pdf
[8] Available at: https://www.pge.com/includes/docs/pdfs/myhome/saveenergymoney/financialassistance/medicalbaseline/medbaseline_application_eng_v2.pdf
[9] See the discussion of Napa County's notification priority for medically vulnerable customers in the Joint Local Governments' Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 17–18.
[10] See, e.g., SCE PSPS Post-Event Reporting, July 9–July 21, 2019, p. 4.

which that information and notice is given. SDG&E provides a list of 11 separate information-sharing stages in a PSPS event[11]; the Joint Local Governments strongly support SDG&E's information-sharing framework, but do not believe the Commission should adopt 11 distinct PSPS phases. The utilities must communicate with their public safety partners and customers based on relevant information, not based on the phase of the de-energization event. As the Commission refines the terminology used to describe de-energization events, it should keep this distinction in mind.

As the Joint Local Governments and other parties stated in their proposals, it is important that the utilities' public safety partners and the public understand what the stages of a de-energization event mean in terms of the utility's operations or activities.[12] Any nomenclature adopted by the Commission should be straightforward and accompanied by clear explanations on the utility's website of the corresponding actions, e.g., EOC activated, monitoring developing weather conditions, notification to public safety partners and AFN customers, notification to the general public, etc. As is discussed further below, it is just as important that the utility's public safety partners understand what the utility is doing in connection with a PSPS event stage or in response to new information, as it is that they receive the notification itself.

No amount of information will be useful if it cannot be conveyed to the utility's customers and public safety partners. During the October 9 PSPS event, PG&E's website went down and its teleconferencing technology also kept crashing. The Joint Local Governments know that PG&E is well aware of its technical difficulties, but PG&E's failure to shore up its website and communications systems against the most obvious and predictable result of a

[11] SDG&E Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 8–9.
[12] See, e.g., RCRC Comments, p. 5; CforAT Proposal, p. 4;

widespread de-energization—that millions of people would rush to the website for information—is a fact that bears repeating.

e. Are there other terms that must be defined to ensure effective communication between utilities, public safety partners, critical facilities and critical infrastructure, and utility customers, e.g. "extreme wildfire conditions"?

(1) Additional Contextual Information

RCRC's recommendation that the definition of "official notification" be clarified for PG&E's de-energization program has merit.[13] The need to clarify what constitutes official notification, as opposed to unofficial heads-up phone calls from the utility to alert a local government of an impending de-energization, is as much an operational clarification as a definitional one, as is demonstrated by the series of questions RCRC poses. Early notification to local emergency managers and Public Information Officers that a de-energization may occur is crucial, and the Joint Local Governments support PG&E's emerging practice of providing that early notice.[14] It is just as important that local public safety partners receive the context for the information the utility provides as it is that they receive the information itself. If a local emergency manager does not know why the utility is providing "unofficial" notice, or what de-energization preparation activities the utility is undertaking in connection with that notice—for instance, running the weather models again, or staffing the EOC with a skeleton crew to keep an eye on the developing situation—the emergency manager does not have sufficient information on which to base their decisions about mobilizing their own personnel or to answer questions from the public.

[13] RCRC Comments, p. 5.
[14] PG&E provided early notification of certain PSPS event developments to local emergency managers during the September 23–25 de-energization that affected parts of the North Bay and Sierra Foothills, which Napa and Sonoma found very helpful.

PG&E also needs to clarify the term "all clear." After the winds died down and the utility was getting ready to begin the re-energization process, it informed its public safety partners that it had given the "all clear." This caused confusion among the members of the public who also learned of the "all clear," because it can be interpreted as meaning the power will be restored imminently. The Joint Local Governments understand "all clear" as PG&E used it to mean that PG&E crews could begin walking the lines prior to re-energization. Again, the operational context for the term needs to be explained to ensure that everyone receiving word of the "all clear" understands what it means in terms of what PG&E is doing.

The Joint Local Governments urge PG&E and SCE to provide contextual information about their internal de-energization activities to public safety partners in addition to the "primary" information. It is important that local governments understand *why* they are receiving the information and what is happening in the utility's EOC.

(2) PSPS Risk vs. Fire Risk

The Joint Local Governments support CalCCA's recommendation that the Commission examine the difference between areas with elevated fire risk and areas with elevated PSPS risk, though additional consideration is warranted before adopting the risk categories CalCCA proposes.[15] One of the concerns consistently raised by the parties in their Track 1 proposals is the lack of information about what circumstances will support a transmission outage, which circuits are likely to be de-energized under a given weather scenario, and what the impacts of that outage might be.[16] These questions must be answered for both transmission and distribution outages before the utilities can have rational de-energization programs, a proposition that PG&E proved last week, and answering them will likely take time. The Joint Local

[15] CalCCA Proposal, pp. 9–10.
[16] See, e.g., CalCCA Proposal, pp. 29–31; CforAT Phase 2, Track 1 Proposal, pp. 18–20; San Francisco Proposal, pp. 8–9; William B. Abrams De-Energization Phase 2, Track 1 Comments, p. 13;

Governments do not believe that PG&E and SCE have performed the necessary modeling to understand how various PSPS conditions may affect their circuits and transmission lines—and based on the inaccurate outage maps PG&E provided during the October 9 de-energization, the Joint Local Governments' belief appears correct.

Based on outward appearances, it is unlikely that the utilities can provide the information necessary to develop reliable PSPS risk categories during Track 1. If, however, the utilities have performed the modeling to gain a basic understanding of likely outage scenarios at the distribution and transmission levels, but have not shared those results with their public safety partners and the Commission, that is a grave information-sharing failure that must be remedied swiftly. The Commission should, however, ensure that the utilities work to achieve the necessary level of preparedness and transparency before the 2020 fire season, and should develop PSPS risk criteria based on that information.

It is also necessary to examine and understand the public health impacts of a de-energization before establishing meaningful PSPS risk categories. De-energization events have significant impacts on the healthcare system (911 ambulance dispatch, long-term care facilities that must rely on backup generation, dialysis facilities, outpatient clinics), water systems, and sewer systems. When the healthcare system is compromised, this harms not only AFN populations, but all residents in the affected community. The Commission should direct the large investor-owned utilities to work with the California Department of Public Health to perform health impact assessments of de-energization events due to the downstream consequences of shutting the power off.

3. Access and Functional Needs Populations

The parties that addressed utility outreach and communication with AFN populations generally advocated for the same basic principles: partnering with community-based

organizations that serve AFN individuals; communicating through multiple mediums to ensure that the information reaches customers in a format they find helpful; working with local government health services to improve outreach and expand the utilities' medical baseline registries; and conducting workshops with CalOES and local governments to determine how best to identify and educate AFN populations about de-energization. It was also widely noted that the utilities' medical baseline registries do not account for all AFN individuals in the utilities' service territories.[17] When PG&E provided its medical baseline customer information during the October 9 PSPS, Napa County saw that PG&E's registry continues to be significantly smaller than the County's own In Home Support Services, California Children's Services, and emPOWER lists of vulnerable residents. Several parties also advocated that the utilities retain responsibility for providing notice of de-energization events to AFN customers, while partner agencies may provide secondary or supplemental notice and outreach.[18] The Joint Local Governments support these recommendations, as well as the proposals that the utilities provide resources to local governments to support the increased outreach and care requirements that de-energizations impose on local emergency and health departments.

a. What efforts can result in more complete contact lists of AFN utility customers while still maintaining legal and privacy protections?

(1) Utility Sharing of Customer Information

The customer information privacy protections cited in the parties' proposals largely relate to customer gas or electricity usage information,[19] which does not technically address a customer's medical baseline status. The Joint Local Governments believe that a

[17] See, e.g., CforAT Proposal, pp. 5–6; CalCCA Proposal, p. 10; TURN Phase 2 Proposals, p. 3; City of San Jose Phase 2 Comments, pp. 6–7; City and County of San Francisco Proposal, p. 4;
[18] See CforAT Proposal, pp. 6–7; San Francisco Proposal, p. 5.
[19] SDG&E Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 5–6; CalCCA Proposal, p. 12;

customer's enrollment in the medical baseline program, or the low-income assistance programs offered by the utilities, is entitled to privacy protection; the Commission's existing framework for confidential treatment of customer information, however, is not designed with de-energization in mind. As SDG&E noted in its proposal, the Commission has broad constitutional authority to issue new rules governing the utilities' ability to share customer information with state and local governments.[20] While the Executive Director's October 8, 2019 directive to the large investor-owned utilities to share medical baseline information with local governments subject only to general confidentiality requirements addresses the issue for now, for a more permanent solution the Joint Local Governments support SDG&E's recommendation that the Commission create a rule allowing the utilities to share medical baseline customer information with state and local governments; the new rule should be informed by the existing information privacy requirements imposed on state and local government health departments by HIPAA.[21]

Senate Bill 821 (2018) did establish a procedure for local governments to enter into agreements with the utilities to access customers' contact information for purposes of enrolling county residents in a county-operated public emergency warning system.[22] But the statute essentially duplicates the existing NDA process that allows public safety partners to obtain critical facility and medical baseline information from the utility and does not appear to provide local governments with greater flexibility to use the information during a de-energization than is afforded by the NDA process. The Joint Local Governments do not believe that SB 821 provides a solution to the issue of being unable to dispatch third-party medical service providers based on medical baseline customer information,[23] as the statute limits use of customer

[20] SDG&E Proposals, p. 5.
[21] *Ibid.*; Joint Local Governments' Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 14–15.
[22] Pub. Util. Code § 8593.4(a).
[23] Joint Local Governments' Proposals, pp. 10–15.

information to enrollment in a county emergency notification system. The Commission must still create new customer information sharing rules for de-energization events.

PG&E does not believe that new information-sharing protocols are necessary for de-energization.[24] Given the practical problems created by the current customer information privacy rules, and PG&E's interpretation of those rules as preventing a local health department from providing medical care via third-party emergency services providers based on customer information, the Joint Local Governments strongly disagree with PG&E's position.[25] The Joint Local Governments also note that PG&E's view that its current contact lists for potential AFN customers "are sufficiently complete for purposes of PG&E's implementation of its PSPS program" is a meaningless statement.[26] The issue is whether the utilities' medical baseline registries are sufficiently robust to ensure effective notification of a PSPS to medical baseline customers; whether PG&E is able to "implement" its de-energization program is a separate issue. PG&E either does not understand the distinction or has chosen to ignore it. PG&E appears to ignore the fact that its AFN customer lists will be used by local governments to protect the health and safety of PG&E's customers, which makes PG&E's notions about "sufficiency" dangerous as well as obtuse. As the Joint Local Governments have observed, PG&E is already implementing its program, but its program shows considerable room for improvement.

Because local governments are involved in mobilizing on-the-ground resources before and during a de-energization, including measures to assist AFN individuals, de-energization events put significant a strain on local personnel, equipment, and financial resources. PG&E's reminder to the Commission that it is not in the business of providing

[24] PG&E Opening Comments on PSPS Phase 2, Track 1, pp. 5–6.
[25] See Joint Local Governments' Proposals, pp. 10–15.
[26] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 4.

medical care or support services is accurate[27]—and well-taken, given the disaster that would surely result if PG&E, for instance, were to attempt it—but what is missing from the large utilities' AFN customer de-energization plans is an acknowledgment of the responsibilities they place on local governments. Even if the utilities cannot provide actual care for their AFN customers in the form of transportation, medical assistance, or welfare checks, they can—and they must—provide resources to those who can. The Joint Local Governments strongly support CforAT's recommendation that the utilities provide resources to aid local outreach and response efforts.[28] These resources should include:

- Expanding Community Resource Center (CRC) operating hours to 24 hours so that people on CPAP and oxygen can have more opportunity to recharge and use their devices. It takes three to six hours to recharge oxygen compressors. The current operating hours of the CRCs is not adequate to meet these needs;
- Providing stipends or lodging resources for people with medical equipment that must be plugged into the wall overnight. While some individuals can weather a night without their equipment, others cannot breathe or otherwise continue living without it;
- Entering into MOUs with paratransit or other transportation providers, and ensuring that non-911 transportation is available for customers who need it when they are notified of a de-energization, including the isolated elderly who are dependent on Durable Medical Equipment or life support and who cannot get to CRCs or other locations without assistance;

[27] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 5.
[28] CforAT Proposal, pp. 6–7.

- PG&E employees who perform in-person notifications should be equipped to fill up generators if a resident's fuel supply is running low or has run out;
- Providing printed informational materials to local health departments and community-based organizations;
- Providing utility-led training sessions to ensure that local health departments know how to successfully fill out medical baseline registration forms. Training sessions must include healthcare providers, as most of the medical baseline forms must be filled out by MDs, NPs, and PAs;
- Creating informational websites targeted to the needs of certain populations; and
- Providing grants to community-based organizations and to local governments.

Additionally, the large utilities should be required to provide any other assistance identified by other parties or requested by local governments and CBOs that will alleviate the burden on the agencies that provide care and services and will improve AFN populations' access to information and services.

CalCCA's recommendation that the utilities provide local governments with information for customers enrolled in the CARE and FERA programs, to allow local governments to identify areas that may require additional support or to prioritize locations of resiliency centers during a de-energization, is worthwhile in principle but may not produce the

intended benefits when implemented.[29] Local governments are generally aware of the demographics of the various areas in their jurisdictions, as well as any local conditions that could impact provision of emergency services, such as ingress/egress bottlenecks, poor cellular reception or a lack of wireless service, or distance from the main population center. To the extent CalCCA's recommendation is intended to provide this type of information to local governments, it may be unnecessary. If the customer information is intended to allow local governments to perform additional outreach, provide additional services, or to perform in-person welfare checks during a de-energization, the existing local government protocols, programs, and resources must be examined carefully to prevent duplication and to avoid creating an obligation for local governments to commit resources that may not be available.

(2) Public Safety Partner Sharing of Resident Information with the Utilities

It is not clear whether it is necessary for state and local governments to share information with the utilities about residents receiving care and services from the government health department(s). As a preliminary matter, HIPAA protections would likely prohibit local governments from sharing medical information with a third party that does not provide medical treatment or services.[30] And while the definition of AFN populations includes more individuals than those who qualify for medical baseline or low-income assistance programs, the questions of which individuals need what kind of notification, and whether non-enrolled AFN individuals will require assistance during a de-energization event, have not yet been answered. Given the legal restrictions, the limitations of the utilities' medical baseline registries, and the fact that outreach and notification best practices are still being developed, the Joint Local Governments support CforAT's recommendation that local governments maintain their own lists of vulnerable

[29] CalCCA Proposal, pp. 12–13.
[30] See Joint Local Governments' Proposal, pp. 11–12.

residents and that, during a PSPS event, the utilities provide necessary information to public safety partners.[31]

The Joint Local Governments are concerned that proposals for local governments to share resident information with the utilities will also place a significant burden on local resources. For example, the City of San Jose proposes that county public health agencies may be able to help facilitate a program whereby AFN customers contact their utility to be placed on a "door knock" notification list.[32] The intent behind this proposal is worthy of support, but the execution will likely present difficulties. Because the definition of AFN customers adopted in this proceeding is so broad, the resulting list of customers requesting in-person notification could contain thousands of names in every county. Neither the utility nor the county—nor the utility and county combined—will have the resources for in-person notification; if those customers expect to receive a door knock notification, their safety may be jeopardized if they do not receive one. The Joint Local Governments fully support increased partnership between the utilities, local governments, and community-based organizations that work with AFN and under-served populations. The Commission should proceed carefully, however, when deciding whether to mandate specific actions or programs. Any required partnership activities must take into account the resources of the local government and/or CBO, and should be designed to address an identified need or problem.

4. PSPS Strategy and Decision-Making

a. What criteria should the Commission evaluate when assessing whether PSPS is being used as a measure of last resort?

Before reaching the question of the appropriate criteria for assessing the utilities' de-energization decisions, the Commission must address the review process. Currently, the

[31] CforAT Proposal, pp. 6–7.
[32] San Jose Phase 2 Comments, pp. 6–7.

IOUs submit after-action reports 10 business days after the conclusion of a de-energization event and other parties may submit comments on the report within 15 days. There is no framework for the Commission to follow up on the after-action reports or responsive comments, and there are no clear consequences for the utilities' failure to make reasonable decisions or failure to execute their PSPS programs effectively. That must change. The Joint Local Governments fully support CalCCA's motion to require PG&E and SCE for formally file their after-action reports for the October 2019 de-energization events in this docket,[33] and the letter from Senator Hill urging the Commission to conduct formal post-event reviews of the utilities' de-energizations.[34] That review must include an assessment of the health impacts, including 911 calls, morbidity, and mortality related to the de-energization event. There must be a formal review process and there must be consequences for failure.

In terms of the assessment criteria, many parties observed that PG&E's and SCE's PSPS after-action reports need to contain more substantive information than they have thus far.[35] The parties recommend that PG&E and SCE be required to discuss alternatives to de-energization and why they were deemed insufficient,[36] quantification of the cost/risk–benefit analysis performed for the de-energization,[37] detailed weather analysis,[38] availability of mitigation measures,[39] and other aspects of the de-energization decisionmaking process that will

[33] Motion of the California Community Choice Association to Require Formal Filing of PG&E and SCE PSPS Post-Event Reports and to Modify Procedural Schedule to Allow Additional Comments (October 11, 2019).
[34] Letter from Senator Hill re: Need for Review of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (October 9, 2019).
[35] See, e.g., Joint Local Governments' Proposals, pp. 18–19; TURN Proposal, pp. 9–10; MGRA Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 7–8; CalCCA Proposal, pp. 14–15, 31; cf. San Francisco Proposal, p. 6; cf. Terjung/Naylor Proposal, p. 15.
[36] Joint Local Governments' Proposals, pp. 18–19; TURN Proposal, p. 9.
[37] EPUC Proposal on Phase 2, Track 1 Scoping Memo, pp. 7–9; San Francisco Proposal, p. 6; TURN Proposal, pp. 6–7, 9; UCAN Phase 2 Proposals, pp. 5–6; William B. Abrams Comments, pp. 8–9, 13.
[38] MGRA Proposals, pp. 4–5; SCE Comments on Phase 2, Track 1 Issues, p. 5; William B. Abrams Comments, pp. 9–11; UCAN Proposals, pp. 7–8.
[39] Joint Local Governments' Proposals, p. 19; EPUC Proposal, p. 9.

provide the necessary contextual information for whether the PSPS event was a last resort. The utilities must assess the health impacts of the event, as described above. It is also important that the utilities understand—and start discussing—the impacts of de-energization on rural communities; as RCRC and Jane E. Terjung and William E. Naylor describe in their proposals, rural and remote communities face significant practical problems with de-energization.[40] If the power must be turned off, PG&E and SCE need to address the risks to their communities created by de-energization, and explain the mitigations deployed and the alternatives considered. The Joint Local Governments support the parties' proposals for increased substance in the after-action reports.

Before shutting the power off, SDG&E and SCE patrol the lines that may be de-energized to identify any potential hazards and see if they can be mitigated.[41] The Joint Local Governments are not aware of whether PG&E does this as well. If it does not, the Joint Local Governments recommend that PG&E adopt this practice. If a hazard can be remediated in the field, the public will be all the safer for it, and the inspection process will provide more information about the circumstances that (putatively) support de-energization.

PG&E's proposal that the Commission determine if a specific de-energization event was a last resort by looking to the activities in the utilities' Wildfire Mitigation Plans suggests either that PG&E has no understanding of the purpose of the after-action reports or has no interest in making improvements based on feedback from the communities it de-energized.[42] Just as PG&E's ability to implement its PSPS program has nothing to do with the completeness

[40] RCRC Comments, pp. 2–3; Terjung/Naylor Phase 2, Track 1 Proposal, *passim*.
[41] SDG&E Proposals, p. 3 (Pre-event Period); SCE Comments, p. 5.
[42] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 7.

of its medical baseline registry,[43] whether PG&E made a reasonable decision on a specific date to de-energize part of its system has nothing to do with its over-arching WMP program, which is designed to meet a general goal: "help reduce the need for a future PSPS event."[44] The Joint Local Governments are at a loss to understand how, in the face of its disastrous PSPS program, which has suffered repeated public failures, PG&E can suggest that a long-term fire-resiliency program that has not yet been assessed for effectiveness is adequate to judge whether PG&E did everything possible before shutting off power on a specific occasion. The blind faith in the sufficiency of its own programs that pervades PG&E's Track 1 comments is symptomatic of the utility's larger inability to change its practices in the face of overwhelming evidence that the status quo is not working. As PG&E appears unable or unwilling to inventory its shortcomings and make real changes to address them, the Commission must implement formal review of PG&E's after-action reports, order corrective action, and impose consequences for failure to make the identified improvements. President Batjer's October 14, 2019 letter to PG&E cataloguing its failures during the recent de-energization and mandating a significant number of immediate improvements is a laudable approach to remedying PG&E's shortcomings. The Joint Local Governments have no concerns about the measures ordered by President Batjer, and only request that, to the extent the identified improvements do not include the measures recommended by PG&E's local public safety partners, that the Commission expand the scope of the mandated improvements to address those issues.

[43] PG&E's ability to have an *effective* PSPS program would depend on the accuracy of its medical baseline registry, but PG&E is able to implement its program regardless of the efficacy.
[44] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 7.

b. Would adopting standardized wildfire risk criteria across utilities promote the public safety, and if so, what criteria should be adopted?

The Joint Local Governments continue to believe that the differences in geography and climate in the utilities' service territories do not lend themselves to standardized risk criteria. But it is possible to create risk criteria for specific micro-climates (e.g., areas that regularly experience wind or heavy dry fuel loads) and/or topographical features (e.g., canyons), and to communicate those criteria to the public safety partners in the particular climatological/topographical areas.

5. Notification and Communication

The common refrain in the first phase of this proceeding was increased communication and transparency from the utilities; that refrain is amplified in Phase 2 and cannot be ignored after PG&E's October 9 de-energization.

a. What information should be communicated during a PSPS event, as well as when power lines are being re-energized, and when (at what intervals) should that information be communicated?

(1) Information-sharing Principles and Recommended Improvements

SDG&E may have said it best: "For Public Safety Partners and impacted and adjacent jurisdictions (Priority Notification Entities), the information that should be communicated is the information that would be necessary for them to make informed decisions that best support public safety and operations."[45] SCE also provides a communication strategy that, if implemented as described, should be effective: advance notification that is aligned with existing State alerting guidelines, released at a regular cadence that reflects incident specifics, and includes information about the affected location(s), instructions on what to do during the

[45] SDG&E Proposals, p. 9.

event, when to expect the next communication about the event, and links to resources.[46] The public safety partners in this proceeding have provided the substantive information that should be shared in accordance with the principles articulated by SDG&E and SCE: sufficient advance notice; notification to neighboring jurisdictions; greater information-sharing with CCAs and critical facilities; maps of potentially or actually impacted circuits; numbers of impacted customers; an understanding of the utility's internal decisionmaking criteria and process; expected outage duration; relevant re-energization information; and that developing information be provided in real time. The utilities' task in providing this information may not be easy, but it is necessary.

PG&E does not propose any changes to the existing notification protocols.[47] PG&E made this statement knowing the many communication and notification shortfalls the Joint Local Governments and its other customers and safety partners have identified since its first de-energization of 2019. Instead of addressing these known failures, PG&E informed the Commission that it continues to work with its public safety partners "to share information and ensure they are familiar with PSPS notification content, format[,] and messaging."[48] With this pledge, PG&E intends to continue pushing out whatever information it determines is relevant and will continue its relentless and obtuse campaign to educate emergency management professionals about the utility's PSPS program through the same educational handouts, PowerPoints, and canned presentations that its public safety partners have by now memorized. The tragedy of the 850 meetings PG&E has held with its public safety partners in 2019—meetings the utility touts as evidence of its robust communication[49]—is that the emergency

[46] SCE Comments, p. 6.
[47] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 8.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] PG&E PSPS Progress Report, p. 6, § 3.1.

managers and first responders who the meetings were intended to educate likely did not leave those meetings with a meaningful understanding of how PG&E's de-energization plan would affect *their community*. The Joint Local Governments' emergency managers certainly did not.

While the Joint Local Governments believe that the Commission in Phase 1 adopted broad requirements that the utilities communicate, coordinate, and share meaningful information with their public safety partners, PG&E's implementation of those requirements has fallen short and changes *are* therefore necessary.[50]

External coordination and information-sharing will improve if the utilities ensure their internal notification and communication protocols are understood by the utilities' personnel. The Public Advocates' Office notes that SCE has started to hold short pre-notification meetings before de-energization events to establish a cadence and ensure SCE personnel are aware of and aligned with the utility's internal notification protocols.[51] The Joint Local Governments support this practice and recommend that PG&E adopt it, if it has not already done so. It is important for local emergency managers and first responders to understand other agencies' internal "battle rhythms" during an emergency. For example, the National Weather Service sends twice-daily partner briefing emails at roughly the same times each day during a weather event (Fire Weather Watch, Red Flag, atmospheric rivers, etc.), whether the event is just being monitored or has been formally announced. The NWS runs internal computer models around 0700 and 1400 hours, and sends partner briefing emails around 0800 and 1500 or 1600; the potentially impacted emergency managers know when to start keeping an eye on their email for updates. That certainty—even if it is a two-hour window—is extremely helpful to emergency managers and first responders. The

[50] Joint Local Governments Proposals, pp. 20–34; see also, William B. Abrams Comments, p. 14; cf. WSPA Comments On PSPS Phase 2, Track 1 Scope, pp. 7–8.
[51] Public Advocates Office Track 1 Proposal, p. 7.

utilities should establish their internal cadences and provide their public safety partners with that same certainty.

Effective notification and information-sharing is also necessary before and during *re*-energization. As EBMUD and others described, sudden re-energization can cause surges that damage millions of dollars in equipment and infrastructure.[52] During the October 9 PSPS, PG&E was reluctant to share the status of its re-energization readiness or efforts with the affected public safety partners. There is a difference between managing expectations by not committing to an exact restoration timeline and withholding important information that public safety partners and critical facilities need in order to manage the ongoing outage and prepare for re-energization. The Joint Local Governments support the parties' recommendations that the utilities communicate re-energization information that includes specific circuits to be inspected, the order of inspection, expected completion and restoration timelines, and advance notice of re-energization.[53]

(2) Problems with Sharing Information During PG&E's October 9–11 PSPS

(a) Medical Baseline Information

The recent large-scale de-energization in PG&E's service territory revealed a few information-sharing issues relating to medical baseline customer information and critical facilities information. Until the Commission ordered the large utilities to dispense with the nondisclosure agreement for medical baseline customer information, PG&E would only provide contact information for individual medical baseline and critical facility customers to local governments subject to a nondisclosure agreement. Sonoma County executed its NDA on

[52] EBMUD Comments and Proposals on Phase 2, Track 1 Issues, p. 2; EPUC Proposal on Phase 2, Track 1 Scoping Memo, p. 5.
[53] See EBMUD Comments, p. 2.

October 8, 2019, and was told that the customer information would be made available in the County's PSPS web portal *on request*. Had Sonoma's attorneys not noticed the two-word caveat in the email to PG&E's EOC staff directing full access to the confidential information, Sonoma likely would not have received it. The PG&E attorney in charge of the NDA process did not know to whom that request had to be made. Sonoma's PG&E liaison resolved the matter quickly, but the requirement to affirmatively request the information be provided, after executing an NDA that covers only the two categories of customer information at issue, was absurd.

The Executive Director's October 9, 2019 letter to the large utilities directing them to provide medical baseline customer information to county and tribal government emergency response personnel when a de-energization is initiated addresses, to a large extent, the NDA-related issues the Joint Local Governments have raised in Track 1. The Executive Director's admonition that the utilities must take appropriate measures to ensure that the data is shared confidentially is important—it is also broad enough that it can be read to allow the utilities to impose onerous information-handling requirements on local governments. A secure web portal or other secure file-transfer mechanism should suffice. For instance, PG&E's PSPS web portal, which allows local governments access to outage maps, affected customer information (with and NDA), and related information, requires a password login and is, based on the Joint Local Governments' discussions with PG&E, secure from a data-protection standpoint. Local governments handle confidential information constantly; the Commission should find that no specific obligations, beyond the requirement to protect the information from public disclosure using the local government's normal protocols and systems, may be imposed by the utilities as a condition of receiving medical baseline customer information during a de-energization event.

This recommendation is consistent with CalCCA's proposal for customer information-sharing, which the Joint Local Governments strongly support.[54]

The Executive Director's letter does not cover critical facilities. PG&E's classification of all critical facility information as confidential, regardless of whether the name and address and contact information of the facility can be found with a Google search, is unreasonable. Most critical facilities, as defined by the Commission in Phase 1, are known to the public. The Commission also ordered PG&E to work with local public safety partners to identify critical facilities in their jurisdiction.[55] There are very few facilities, then, that can be considered confidential under any legal construct. Notwithstanding this, PG&E requires an NDA for a local government to obtain an outage-specific list of affected facilities. If the local government's Board or Council has not authorized the NDA—and many local governments have serious reservations about doing so—the local emergency managers' response efforts may be hindered. The Commission should direct PG&E to provide critical facility information to local public safety partners with no NDA, or subject to the same confidential-treatment requirements the Joint Local Governments recommend for the medical baseline customer information.

b. Where [CCA] territories exist, what role should CCAs play in communicating about PSPS events?

The Joint Local Governments support the recommendations made by CalCCA regarding increased information-sharing and coordination by the utilities with CCAs operating in their service territory.[56] The CCAs' recommendation that they be allowed to administer programs to develop and operate microgrid facilities supported by new grants and funding

[54] CalCCA Proposal, pp. 25–26.
[55] See D.19-05-042, p. 75.
[56] CalCCA Proposal, pp. 27–28.

opportunities should also receive the Commission's full backing.[57] CCAs are community-based and community-focused and they have the flexibility to develop local energy projects that can bolster a community's resiliency. The large utilities are not so nimble.

c. Are additional communication guidelines required in the event of a transmission-level PSPS beyond those adopted in Resolution ESRB-8 and D.19-05-042?

Because of the large potential impact of a transmission de-energization, it is important the utilities provide as much advance notice to public safety partners and include a clear and accurate description of which "downstream" circuits are likely to be impacted. Public safety partners in the areas adjacent to the transmission de-energization also need to be notified of the impending outage. For example, Highway 101, the main artery through Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties, could turn into a parking lot if even one county were de-energized; the traffic bottleneck would in turn impact safety and emergency services. Until the utilities are able to gain sufficient insight into their own systems and the potential scenarios under which transmission lines may need to be de-energized, which will allow the Commission and parties to understand the potential impacts of a transmission-level de-energization, the Joint Local Governments are not confident that a transmission-level de-energization will involve the level of clarity necessary to ensure public safety partners have the information they need. It may be that the existing guidelines, with a few additions, are sufficient—assuming the utility implements them effectively. That caveat is the crucial element. The best guidelines in the world won't benefit the public if the utility cannot implement them.

6. PSPS and Transmission Lines

The clearest message from the parties' proposals on de-energization of transmission lines is that there is not enough information to understand the de-energization

[57] CalCCA Phase 2 Proposal, p. 28.

decision-making process, the areas that might be de-energized, or the impacts of those events. The Joint Local Governments concur that a significant amount of additional information is necessary before the Commission and the parties can design a rational transmission de-energization program. PG&E's October 9 de-energization, which is reported to have involved approximately 100 transmission lines, is proof of this principle.

a. What coordination is required between the electric IOUs and public safety partners, the [CAISO], the [FERC,] and others to ensure safe PSPS events, which require the shut-off of transmission lines?

The Joint Local Governments join the other parties that emphasized the need for effective communication between the utility and its public safety partners for a transmission-level de-energization. There must be legitimate two-way communication and partnership between the utilities and their public safety partners to develop these best practices. PG&E, the only utility that has, to the Joint Local Governments' knowledge, de-energized transmission lines, currently has neither.

PG&E points to its seven-day weather forecast website as the result of extensive outreach and feedback from its public safety partners.[58] While the Joint Local Governments recognize that PG&E put significant time and resources into the meetings and the website, PG&E did not vet the weather forecast website with its public safety partners and, as a result, the website's utility is questionable.[59] And of course, it is of no use at all when PG&E's website crashes, as it did for the duration of the October 9 outage. Coordination and information-sharing for all de-energization events should be as effective as possible, but this need will be more acute in the event of a transmission outage that impacts a large geographic region.

[58] PG&E Opening Comments, pp. 10–11.
[59] Joint Local Governments' Phase 2, Track 1 Proposals, pp. 5–8.

(1) In addition to those listed above, with whom must the electric IOUs coordinate to prepare for and notice transmission level PSPS events?

Notification should be provided to jurisdictions adjacent to the ones that are impacted or are likely to be impacted. As is discussed above, de-energizations can have significant impacts on traffic, emergency response capabilities, and other services in entire regions, even if the power remains on in many locations.

b. How should the Commission evaluate the impacts of transmission line PSPS versus distribution level PSPS, and what guidelines should be adopted to sufficiently prepare for and mitigate those impacts?

Before the Commission can evaluate the impacts of a transmission-level PSPS, the Commission and parties must understand the likely impacts. The October 9 de-energization may prove useful in this regard. In addition to examining the actual outage impacts on PG&E's system and actual impacts to the affected communities, the utilities must create and share likely outage scenarios based on weather modeling and their own circuit maps. SCE proposes that proactively evaluating the loss of lines supporting large facilities and the corresponding impacts of a transmission-level PSPS on the public[60]; this is a good start, but the evaluation of transmission de-energization should not focus solely on large facilities. It will be necessary to understand the potential outage areas, what critical facilities are in those areas, whether there are identifiable populations of AFN or financially vulnerable individuals, whether there are ingress/egress constraints in the de-energized region(s), and how the topography of an area may impact fire risk. These considerations should be used to inform the utility's risk–benefit analysis for any de-energization, but particularly for large transmission outages. Once the impacts are

[60] SCE Comments, p. 8.

better understood, the Commission should determine whether the impacts justify different decisionmaking criteria or greater mitigation efforts for transmission-level PSPS events.

PG&E's observation that, "[o]ther than the potential impact to grid reliability and potential scale of transmission versus distribution PSPS, the impacts are generally similar," and that, as such, the impacts of a PSPS event should be weighed on an event-by-event basis[61] suggests that PG&E does not appreciate the potential impacts of a large-scale transmission PSPS. That devil-may-care view might have changed after the October 9 event, but the fact that PG&E ever believed its view to be reasonable is troubling in and of itself. The size of the outage area determines whether residents have to travel one town or several counties over to find the nearest working gas station or grocery store or air-conditioned building. The size of the outage area dictates how far hospital patients must travel—or be transported—to receive care the hospital cannot offer while on backup power. The size of the outage area informs the wireless telephone and internet service dead zone that will result if the outage lasts longer than the telecommunications facilities' backup power. The size of the outage area also determines the size of the areas without water or sewer service, as much of the water infrastructure in the rural areas of PG&E's service territory requires electricity to operate. Yet PG&E states that additional guidelines beyond the three advance notifications to transmission-level customers, and the guidelines in its PSPS Progress Report, are not necessary to prepare for and mitigate PSPS impacts at the transmission level.[62] The Commission cannot accept this conclusion. While its September 23–25 PSPS in the North Bay a ran smoother than its June 8 PSPS, PG&E still does not have a functional PSPS program.

[61] PG&E Opening Comments, p. 11.
[62] *Id.* at p. 12.

7. Lessons Learned: SCE

Santa Barbara County has found SCE to be a good partner during the two potential and one actual de-energization events that affected the County.[63] Santa Barbara's emergency management has observed, however, that SCE must enhance its readiness to share situational awareness and other critical information in real time. During these events, SCE had to coordinate with a large number of agencies and local governments, which appeared to slow the utility's ability to share information in a timely manner. Santa Barbara hopes that SCE is better prepared and better staffed during future events, so that information-sharing with its public safety partners is fast and effective. Some specific areas of improvement that would enhance situational awareness and communications are:

- Establishing daily situation status briefing calls, twice daily, scheduled at a specified time; preferably reflecting an early am (e.g., 0730) and end of day (e.g., 1730) timeline. This concept would assist local governments in making decisions on staffing and actions needed for each response shift.
- Continued work on language used in notifications and updates to the public is necessary to reduce confusion and enhance the public's ability to make informed decisions. This should include push notifications (text, email, etc.), as well as social media, website, and media outreach. An example of a recommended change is in the language relating to power surges on sensitive medical equipment during re-energization, and using "you may be in an area of impact" versus "you are impacted."
- It is important for the utilities to be clear with public safety partners regarding the utilities' process for identifying customers that need to notified and the outage maps

[63] July 11–19 and 22–28, 2019 (operating restrictions placed on Santa Barbara County and neighboring jurisdictions). The September 7, 2019 event resulted in a 22-hour outage.

that form the basis for customer notifications. For example, Santa Barbara learned that SCE utilizes their circuit maps, which captures the customers located in close proximity to the circuits. However, SCE also gave Santa Barbara "polygon" maps, which create a larger outage zone by connecting with straight lines the circuit maps' actual squiggly lines (circuits). As a result of these dueling maps, SCE was notifying the smaller circuit map-based group of customers and Santa Barbara OEM was notifying the larger polygon group. Although Santa Barbara and SCE did decide to move forward with this dual approach, it highlights the importance of understanding how notifications are being conceived of and conducted by the utilities.

- The utilities need more direction from the Commission regarding the terms under which they are required to provide medical baseline and critical care customer information, critical facilities information, and other relevant PSPS-related information.
- Information regarding the actual facts on the ground needs to be more accurate and better-communicated. During one event, SCE notified Santa Barbara staff that a particular circuit was no longer subject to de-energization, but the circuit continued to appear in subsequent reports of potentially or actually impacted facilities, much to the frustration of Santa Barbara's OEM staff. SCE later explained that they were waiting for two weather reporting cycles to show no concerns before removing the circuit from the list and notifying the public. The goal of effective communication is to reduce notification fatigue and yo-yo notifications to the public. It is important that SCE's public safety partners understand its decisionmaking process and criteria, and that communications are clear and have the necessary context.

- Automated notifications to public safety partners, government agencies, and even the public in Santa Barbara County were a problem in the October 2019 de-energization events. Both utilities had issues with automated notifications that could not be explained or corrected during those events. Understanding and improving these types of communication failures is crucial and should be prioritized.
- Order of notifications continues to be a concern. During several de-energization events, notifications were sent to elected officials, CalOES, or the public, *before or at the same time* as the local public safety partners in the impacted jurisdictions. Several of these notifications included incorrect information that had not been verified by the County's OEM with the utility, which caused the misinformation to be shared with elected officials, the public, and the media. It is important that local public safety partners in the impacted area, or those in neighboring jurisdictions who have local authority and jurisdiction to coordinate, are notified first and have the opportunity to work with the utility to verify information and correct notifications if needed.

II. CONCLUSION

President Batjer's observation in her October 14, 2019 letter to PG&E regarding the many failures of the October 9 de-energization event captures perfectly the realities of PG&E's PSPS program: PG&E was offered the resources and advice necessary to build a functional de-energization program but did not avail itself of either, and the resulting large-scale de-energization was a failure of significant proportions. The Joint Local Governments believe that the Commission will take seriously the shortcomings detailed in these comments, as well as the recommendations for improvements to PG&E's practices; time will tell whether PG&E is able to do the same.

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