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MEDIA ADVISORY

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CPUC HOSTS EN BANC ON UTILITY POLE SAFETY

SAN FRANCISCO, March 8, 2016 -- The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will hold a Utility Pole Safety En Banc, as follows:

WHEN: Thursday, April 28, 2016, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

WHERE: Ronald Reagan State Building, 300 S. Spring St., Los Angeles

WHY: The CPUC has considered utility pole safety issues in various proceedings. This En Banc will begin a broader conversation on utility pole safety by bringing together representatives from different industries and stakeholder groups for a high-level discussion of utility pole safety not limited to a specific incident, industry, or service territory.

WHO: CPUC Commissioners, and representatives from electric utilities, the communications industry, public safety groups, employee organizations, consumer and community groups. There will also be an opportunity for public comment.

Please see the agenda below.

If accommodations are needed to attend, such as sign language interpreters, please contact the CPUC's Public Advisor's Office at public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov or toll free at 866-849-8390 at least five business days in advance of the En Banc.

This En Banc is independent of any CPUC proceeding, and panelists are forbidden from making ex parte comments related to open proceedings during their presentations or discussions. Although a quorum of Commissioners and/or their staff may be in attendance, no official CPUC action will be taken at this event.

For more information on the CPUC, please visit: www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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California Public Utilities Commission

Utility Pole Safety En Banc

April 28, 2016, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Ronald Reagan State Building, 300 S. Spring St., Los Angeles

In recent years, California has experienced utility outages and wildfires associated with utility poles, including the 2007 Fire Siege, sparked by downed electrical lines, and the extended outage associated with the 2011 windstorm.

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has recently considered utility pole safety issues in various proceedings. For example, the CPUC has considered utility pole safety in the context of a specific incident, or an investor-owned utility's General Rate Case, or in the context of extending rights of way to a particular industry.

This day-long En Banc is designed to begin a broader conversation on utility pole safety by bringing together representatives from different industries and stakeholder groups (e.g., investor-owned utilities, communications providers, public safety agencies, consumer groups, utility worker groups) for a high-level discussion of utility pole safety not limited to a specific incident, industry, or service territory.

NOTE: *This En Banc is independent of any CPUC proceeding, and panelists are forbidden from making ex parte comments related to open proceedings during their presentations or discussions. No CPUC Decision will issue as a result of information shared in this En Banc.*

9:30 a.m.-9:55 a.m. Welcome

CPUC Commissioners

9:55 a.m.-10 a.m. Opening

Marzia Zafar, Director, CPUC Policy and Planning Division

10 a.m.-Noon Panel One: The State of Utility Poles in California

CalFire, CWA, Mussey Grade Road Alliance, Consolidated IOUs*, Vegetation Management Expert

****SCE will present on behalf of itself, PG&E, and SDG&E***

Joint pole owners will discuss the state of utility poles in California, including pole safety issues, and the adequacy of existing pole infrastructure for current needs, and projected demand over the next five years.





What is the magnitude of pole overloading in the joint pole owners' respective service areas? What are the consequences of pole overloading? To what do pole owners attribute pole overloading?

How do joint pole owners learn that a pole is overloaded? How do pole owners prevent and remedy pole overloading?

What are pole owners' risk assessment and mitigation strategies? How do pole owners identify threats and rank poles for replacement?

How significant a problem are rogue attachments, i.e. attachments placed without the knowledge or permission of the pole owner(s)?

Have vegetation management techniques changed due to California's drought, suburban sprawl, or other factors?

What is the magnitude and consequence of engineering and design failures short of overloading? Can a pole be in compliance with, e.g., strength requirements, but still pose a safety hazard? Are there particular conditions that pose a risk to employees working on poles and attachments?

Will increasing demand for energy and communications services exhaust the available capacity on existing poles? What is the process for installing additional poles?

Noon-1 p.m. Lunch

1 p.m.-2:30 p.m. Panel Two: Information and Communication

AT&T, CCTA, NESC, Consolidated IOUs

There are approximately 4 million utility poles in California, and any given pole may have multiple parties sharing ownership interests and renting space on that pole. Panelists including joint pole owners and attachers will discuss how they obtain and share information about existing poles and attachments and coordinate new pole attachments.

Are there reliable, shared databases containing information on utility poles and their existing attachments?

Short of visiting a given pole and measuring/weighing the existing infrastructure, is it possible to know with certainty whether a pole is overloaded?

What is the process for obtaining the information necessary to place a new attachment on a pole?



Is it always clear to stakeholders which rules apply when coordinating new attachments, e.g., General Order 95 or Southern California Joint Pole Committee/Northern California Joint Pole Association rules?

2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m. Break

2:45 p.m.-4:15 p.m. Panel Three: Commission Rules and Processes

CWA, Consolidated IOUs, CalFire, TURN, CCTA

Stakeholders will discuss whether there are opportunities to update existing CPUC rules concerning utility poles, e.g., General Order 95, and whether changes to CPUC processes might contribute to greater utility pole safety.

General Order 95 Rule 12 permits grandfathering, and some safety rules only become applicable to facilities when those facilities are replaced or reconstructed. How does the variability of standards from pole to pole affect safety?

Does the National Electric Safety Code contain rules that might inform the CPUC's regulation of utility pole safety? Are there other industry best practices that might similarly inform CPUC rules?

Investor-owned utility General Rate Cases tend to have more limited service lists than safety related investigations. Should the CPUC explore inviting safety intervenors to participate in General Rate Cases in which utility pole safety issues are addressed?

4:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Wrap-up

CPUC President Michael Picker

4:30 p.m.-5 p.m. Public Comment