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**PRESS RELEASE**

Docket #: R.15-05-006

## **CPUC ADOPTS NEW FIRE-SAFETY REGULATIONS**

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 14, 2017 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today continued its work protecting public safety by adopting new fire-safety regulations. Today's decision adopts a High Fire-Threat District that consists of three areas:

- Tier 1 High Hazard Zones on the U.S. Forest Service-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) joint map of Tree Mortality High Hazard Zones
- Tier 2 of the CPUC Fire-Threat Map where there is an elevated risk for utility-associated wildfires
- Tier 3 of the CPUC Fire-Threat Map where there is an extreme risk for utility associated wildfires

A final draft of the CPUC Fire-Threat Map was reviewed by a team of independent experts led by CAL FIRE and is scheduled to come before the CPUC for approval in early 2018.

“This new policy includes significant new fire prevention rules for utility poles and wires, including major new rules for vegetation management,” said CPUC President Michael Picker, the Commissioner assigned to the proceeding. “The map includes a broader definition of fire threat and also shows how dramatically climate impacts are increasing fire risks - land that is covered in the elevated, high and tree mortality fire hazard areas has grown from 31,000 square miles to 70,000 square miles. That's 44 percent of California's total land area.”

The fire-safety regulations adopted today require electric utilities to:

- Prioritize correction of safety hazards based, in part, on whether the safety hazard is located in the High Fire-Threat District.
- Correct non-immediate fire risks in Tier 2 of the High Fire-Threat District within 12 months, and in Tier 3 within 6 months.
- Maintain increased clearances between vegetation and power lines throughout the



High Fire-Threat District.

- Maintain more stringent wire-to-wire clearances for new and reconstructed facilities in Tier 3.
- Conduct annual patrol inspections of their overhead distribution facilities in rural areas of Tier 2 and Tier 3.
- Prepare a fire-prevention plan annually if they have overhead facilities in the High Fire-Threat District.

Further, electric utilities may disconnect service to customers who refuse to provide access to their property for the removal of trees that pose an immediate threat for contacting a power line.

“The ever growing threat of climate change and the wildfires in Northern and Southern California underscore how extremely vigilant we need to be combating the threat of wildfire,” said Commissioner Clifford Rechtschaffen. “These regulations are a very important step, but we also need to continually evaluate whether our wildfire safety practices are enough.”

The fire-safety regulations adopted today also require communications infrastructure providers to conduct patrol and detailed inspections of their overhead facilities at specified minimum frequencies in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Finally, the CPUC’s Safety and Enforcement Division is instructed to confer with CAL FIRE regarding development of a statewide fire-wind map for the purpose of establishing fire-wind-load regulations for utility infrastructure.

The proposal voted on is available at

<http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M200/K638/200638039.PDF>.

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians’ access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. For more information on the CPUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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