



California Public Utilities Commission
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PRESS RELEASE

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CPUC SUSPENDS RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LOW INCOME ENERGY AND TELCO PROGRAMS TO ASSIST CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

SAN FRANCISCO, March 20, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) took actions to temporarily suspend renewal requirements for the California Universal Telephone Service Program (California LifeLine), California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), and Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) programs to ensure continued affordable access to communications and energy services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These actions enable California LifeLine, CARE, and FERA participants to continue to receive program benefits without interruption. The [California LifeLine](#) program provides discounts on home phone and cell phone services to qualified households. [CARE](#) and [FERA](#), programs provide discounts on electric and gas bills for eligible customers based on household income limits. These discounts help consumers lower the cost of their utility bills.

“These actions will provide additional relief to low income customers who are no doubt coping with simply providing the basics for their families,” said CPUC Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma.

On March 17, 2020, the CPUC declared that energy, water, sewer, and communications companies under the CPUC’s jurisdiction will not be allowed to suspend or disconnect service for ratepayers who cannot pay their bills during the virus outbreak. The CPUC’s Executive Director’s letter to the utilities, which the CPUC’s Commissioners will have an opportunity to ratify in the near future, is available at www.cpuc.ca.gov/covid.



The California LifeLine measures in the Assigned Commissioner Ruling issued yesterday, March 19, 2020, are in effect for 90 days and comport with the Governor’s Executive Order N-29-20, and the temporary CARE and FERA measures are effective immediately. At an upcoming CPUC voting meeting, further guidance for the effective dates of these measures will be provided. Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic develops, the CPUC will consider increasing the period for suspending renewal requirements as well as other potential measures to ensure continued access to utility services.

On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom declared a State of Emergency in California related to COVID-19. The CPUC previously adopted utility customer protection measures, including the suspension of CARE and FERA program removals, that apply in cases where the declared emergency relates to the disruption or degradation of utility services in the case of manmade or natural disasters. As the COVID-19 threat spreads, the CPUC further extends customer protection measures to mitigate some of the disruptions to Californians’ daily lives.

The Ruling updating the California LifeLine program is available at <http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Efile/G000/M329/K482/329482660.PDF>.

The letter updating the CARE and FERA programs is available at <https://bit.ly/3a6GCds>.

For more information on CPUC measures and customer service protections in response to COVID-19, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov/covid.

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.

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