**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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# EMERGENCY MOTION OF THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK TO MODIFY WEATHER-RELATED DISCONNECTION PROTECTIONS TO BETTER ADDRESS "EXTREME HEAT" HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS

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Hayley Goodson
Managing Attorney

**The Utility Reform Network**
360 Grand Avenue, #150
Oakland, CA 94610
Phone: (415) 929-8876
Fax: (415) 912-1422
E-mail: hayley@turn.org

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## I. INTRODUCTION

"As Heat Waves Grow Deadlier, Power Becomes a Must," warned the Wall Street Journal in an article published this month.[1] Indeed, California is experiencing more frequent, more severe, and longer-lasting episodes of "extreme heat," creating a greater danger to Californians from heat-related illness and death.[2] This July was the hottest month on record for California.[3] Power at home is critical to ensure that people can run the air conditioner or at least fans when temperatures reach dangerous levels.

Long before the Wall Street Journal conveyed the urgency of banning shutoffs during extreme heat, the Commission recognized that "disconnections are a public health issue, particularly when temperatures are extreme," and that "[l]ost access to energy services on extremely hot or cold days can be life threatening for some populations."[4]

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[1] Phred Dvorak, *As Heat Waves Grow Deadlier, Power Becomes a Must: Most states pass laws banning utilities from shutting off customers during extreme heat*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (Aug. 5, 2024), https://www.wsj.com/us-news/climate-environment/as-heat-waves-grow-deadlier-power-becomes-a-must-e7e05145?st=yewjlddbsw9tz83&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink.

[2] California Department of Public Health, *Be Informed – Extreme Heat*, https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/BI_Natural-Disasters_Extreme-Heat.aspx; California Office of Community Partnerships – Strategic Communications, *Are you Heat Ready, California: Heat is deadlier than any other weather hazard. Be prepared for extreme heat events and find resources to help you stay safe*, https://heatreadyca.com/.

[3] Greg Porter, *July was the hottest month on record for California, new data shows*, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (Aug. 5, 2024), https://www.sfchronicle.com/weather/article/record-hottest-july-california-19621377.php (noting, "July began with an unusually strong and long-lasting heat wave that stretched for nearly two weeks. Despite periodic cooldowns along the coast, the interior parts of the state did not experience significant relief from the heat during the month.").

[4] D.18-12-013, p. 23; D.20-06-003, p. 14.

For this reason, the Commission adopted statewide "extreme weather" limitations on disconnections, applicable to the large, small, and multi-jurisdictional energy utilities.[5] These consumer protections prohibit the California utilities from disconnecting residential electric customers when temperatures above 100 degrees or below 32 degrees are expected, based on a 72-hour look-ahead period, and residential gas customers when temperatures are expected to be below 32 degrees, based on a 72-hour look-ahead period.[6]

While critically important, the Commission's current extreme temperature policy fails to adequately protect Californians from the dangers of "extreme heat" events for three reasons. First, extreme heat is measured relative to normal temperatures and humidity for a specific location; extreme heat does not occur at a specific temperature applicable to all locations.[7] The Commission's policy, in contrast, prohibits disconnections above the same temperature of 100°F throughout California, irrespective of the local temperatures to which residents' bodies are acclimated. Second, daytime highs and nighttime lows that are unusually hot compared to average historical conditions for a given location contribute to extreme heat.[8] High temperatures are particularly

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[5] D.18-12-013, Ordering Paragraph (OP) 1(c) (adopting interim rules for PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, and SoCalGas); D.20-06-003, OP 1(f) (making this rule permanent for PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, and SoCalGas); D.22-08-037, OP 3(e) (applying this rule to the small and multi-jurisdictional energy utilities).

[6] D.20-06-003, OP 1(f); D.22-08-037, OP 3(e).

[7] U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Extreme Heat and Your Health* (June 21, 2024), https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/about/index.html; California Department of Public Health, *Be Informed – Extreme Heat*, https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/BI_Natural-Disasters_Extreme-Heat.aspx.

[8] California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, *Extreme Heat* (July 1, 2024),

dangerous when nights remain warm because warm nights do not allow the body to recover after a hot day.[9] The Commission's current policy does not account for the serious health risks associated with the combination of daytime and nighttime temperatures when days do not reach 100°F. Last but not least, the current disconnection protection does not help utility customers who have already been disconnected but are unable to afford the minimum payment required by the utility to reconnect service. Restoring electric service in anticipation of (or during) an extreme heat event is critical to reducing health and safety risks for these customers.

Pursuant to Rule 11.1 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, The Utility Reform Network (TURN) submits this motion, asking the Commission to modify the existing disconnection protections on an *emergency interim basis* to better align with the dangers of extreme heat events that may occur in the next couple of months. TURN offers two modifications to this end. First, TURN recommends that the Commission prohibit disconnection of residential electric service *either* when (1) temperatures at the customer's location are projected to exceed 100°F based on a 72-hour look-ahead period (the current rule), *or* (2) when the National Weather Service (NWS) "HeatRisk" index for the customer's location is forecast to reach the "Major" (Red/3) risk-level over the next 72 hours, which indicates that the anticipated level of heat will be dangerous to anyone

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https://oehha.ca.gov/climate-change/epic-2022/changes-climate/extreme-heat; California Office of Community Partnerships – Strategic Communications, *Are you Heat Ready, California: Heat is deadlier than any other weather hazard. Be prepared for extreme heat events and find resources to help you stay safe*, https://heatreadyca.com/; Geospacial Innovation Facility at the University of California, Berkeley, Cal-Adapt, "Extreme Heat Days and Warm Nights", https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat/.

[9] California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, *Extreme Heat* (July 1, 2024), https://oehha.ca.gov/climate-change/epic-2022/changes-climate/extreme-heat.

without proper hydration or adequate cooling.[10] Second, the Commission should add a requirement that electric utilities contact recently disconnected customers where the same NWS HeatRisk index criteria is met and offer to reconnect service *without any minimum payment*, as long as the customer agrees to a payment plan for the arrearage.

Once temperatures cool in California this fall, the Commission can undertake a more thorough examination of whether to extend or modify the interim emergency rules to align the Commission's consumer protection policies with the new reality of extreme heat events in California.

## II. BASIS FOR REQUESTED RELIEF

Heat kills more people directly than any other weather-related hazard.[11] When the body is not able to properly cool itself, heat-related illnesses, like heat exhaustion and heat stroke, occur and can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs.[12] Extreme heat also has mental health impacts, with links to mood and anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, vascular dementia, as well as increased use of emergency mental health services, levels of suicide, interpersonal aggression, and violence.[13] According to the

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[10] California Department of Public Health, *Heat Risk Grid: Understanding "HeatRisk" Level, Who is At Risk, and What Actions to Take* (July 27, 2023), https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Heat-Risk-Grid.pdf ; National Weather Service, *NWS HeatRisk – Identifying Potential Heat Risks in the Seven Day Forecast*, https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/.

[11] California Department of Public Health – Be Informed: Extreme Heat, https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/BI_Natural-Disasters_Extreme-Heat.aspx.

[12] CDC – Extreme Heat and Your Health, https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/about/index.html.

[13] California Department of Public Health – Guidance for Local Health Jurisdictions and Community Service Providers for Extreme Heat, "Heath Effects of Extreme Heat," https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/extreme-heat-guidance-for-LHJs.aspx.

California Department of Public Health:

> Certain population groups, such as older adults, infants and children, pregnant people, and people with chronic health conditions can be especially sensitive to heat exposure. These characteristics, combined with existing health inequities and additional factors, such as poverty, type of occupation (e.g., working outdoors or in unconditioned indoor environments), linguistic isolation, housing insecurity, and the legacy of racist redlining policies on neighborhood conditions such as housing, trees, and asphalt can lead to disproportionately high risk of heat-related illness and death.[14]

To protect Californians from the health and safety risks associated with extreme hot weather, the Commission currently prohibits all California jurisdictional electric utilities, large and small, from disconnecting residential customers when the local temperature is expected to exceed 100°F based on a 72-hour look-ahead period.[15] This protection helps to mitigate the health dangers of extreme heat for utility customers living in some parts of California, but as explained below, it does not sufficiently address extreme heat risks in other parts of the state where extreme heat events occur below 100°F. Nor does it protect customers who have recently experienced disconnection for non-payment and cannot afford to meet the utility's payment requirements for reconnection.

### A. Extreme Heat Risks Arise When Temperatures Are Much Higher Than Normal for a Specific Location.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

> Extreme heat is defined as summertime temperatures that are much hotter or humid than average. Because some places are hotter than others, this depends on what's considered average for a particular location at that time

[14] *Id.*

[15] D.20-06-003, OP 1(f); D.22-08-037, OP 3(e).

of year.[16]

There are different definitions used to define "extreme heat". For example, the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment measures extreme heat events as a high daytime temperature between April and October above the highest 5 percent of historical daily high temperatures (1960-1990), or a low nighttime temperature above the highest 5 percent of historical daily low temperatures.[17] The City and County of San Francisco defines an extreme heat event as any temperature in the top 2 percent of all San Francisco temperatures from 1961-1990.[18] Other extreme heat measurement and projection tools used in California, including the Cal-Adapt - Extreme Heat tool, also measure extreme heat days and nights at the 98th percentile of historical temperatures (1961-1990).[19] But all definitions tie extreme heat to historical local average temperatures.[20] This makes sense because human bodies are generally acclimated to

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[16] https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/about/index.html.

[17] California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, "Extreme Heat" (July 1, 2024), https://oehha.ca.gov/climate-change/epic-2022/changes-climate/extreme-heat.

[18] City and County of San Francisco, "Extreme Heat and Health" (May 17, 2023), https://www.sf.gov/reports/may-2023/extreme-heat-and-health.

[19] See https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat. Cal-Adapt is a collaboration between state agency funding programs, university, national lab and private sector researchers, that seeks to make data portraying climate change in California more accessible and actionable for broad audience, with an emphasis on energy sector stakeholders and local governments. The Extreme Heat tool provides temperature thresholds for extreme heat days and warm nights at the 98th percentile of baseline temperatures (1961-1990) at a variety of geographic levels, including County, Census Tract, Watershed, Place (Incorporated and Census-Designated, 2015), and Congressional District.

[20] E.g., "An extreme heat event is two or more days and nights of unusually high heat for your region." (https://heatreadyca.com/); "'Extreme heat events' are days or nights that are unusually hot compared to average historical conditions (using a baseline period from 1960 to 1990) for a given location." (https://oehha.ca.gov/climate-change/epic-2022/changes-climate/extreme-heat ); "Extreme heat describes temperatures that are significantly hotter than average. Generally, this means temperatures above 90 degrees that last more than two days (Ready.gov). Some areas of the country may never hit 90 degrees this summer, but can still experience heat that feels

temperatures to which they are accustomed and need time to safely acclimatize to significant temperature increases.[21]

The relative nature of extreme heat can be illustrated by the temperature threshold for an extreme heat event used by the City and County of San Francisco, which normally has a cool coastal climate: 85°F.[22] San Francisco reports that it is "particularly vulnerable to extreme heat events" and its "emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and mortality begins to increase around 85F with health impacts rising as temperature increases."[23] Many other California coastal cities have extreme heat thresholds below 90°F, with some even below 80°F (e.g., Eureka – 76.9°F, all of Del Norte County – 76.8 °F ).[24] This variation is important to consider when determining when "power becomes a must," in the words of The Wall Street Journal, to avoid the health-related dangers of extreme heat.

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"extreme" based on their normal weather conditions. High levels of humidity can make outdoor temperatures feel hotter." (https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/BI_Natural-Disasters_Extreme-Heat.aspx).

[21] The CDC suggests that human bodies can acclimatize to hotter environments over time through physiological adaptions, but those changes can take 1-2 weeks of exposure. (CDC – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, "Acclimatization", https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/acclima.html). There are limits to acclimatization, of course.

[22] City and County of San Francisco, "Extreme Heat and Health" (May 17, 2023), https://www.sf.gov/reports/may-2023/extreme-heat-and-health. The City and County of San Francisco defines an extreme heat event as any temperature in the top 2 percent of all San Francisco temperatures from 1961-1990, which means any day over 85°F. *Id.*

[23] City and County of San Francisco, "Extreme Heat and Health" (May 17, 2023), https://www.sf.gov/reports/may-2023/extreme-heat-and-health. Of note, UCLA produces "Heat Maps" showing the daily excess number of emergency room (ER) visits and rate of excess ER visits (per 10,000 persons per day) due to extreme heat across the state, at the county and zip code levels. *See* https://sites.google.com/g.ucla.edu/uclaheatmaps/map.

[24] *See* Cal-Adapt – Extreme Heat Days & Warm Nights tool, providing extreme heat thresholds for cities and counties throughout California, https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat.

### B. The Current Hot Weather Disconnection Rule Does Not Adequately Protect Consumers from Extreme Heat Risks.

As mentioned above, the California electric utilities may disconnect residential customers when the local temperature is not expected to exceed 100°F (with certain exceptions not directly tied to weather). In some parts of California, this threshold will guard against shutoffs during extreme heat events. However, it does not sufficiently address extreme heat risks in other parts of the state where extreme heat events occur below 100°F. The following table provides county-level extreme heat thresholds based on the 98th percentile of historical average high temperatures from 1961-1990. Counties shaded in grey experience extreme heat starting at 100°F or higher.[25]

[25] This data comes from the Cal-Adapt Extreme Heat tool available at https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat.

| County | Extreme Heat Threshold (°F) | County | Extreme Heat Threshold (°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alameda County | 92.7 | Orange County | 93.4 |
| Alpine County | 82.5 | Placer County | 93.3 |
| Amador County | 96.8 | Plumas County | 90.6 |
| Butte County | 100.1 | Riverside County | 106.0 |
| Calaveras County | 98.3 | Sacramento County | 102.6 |
| Colusa County | 101.9 | San Benito County | 94.7 |
| Contra Costa County | 96.6 | San Bernardino County | 105.7 |
| Del Norte County | 76.8 | San Diego County | 96.1 |
| El Dorado County | 92.4 | San Francisco County | 85.2 |
| Fresno County | 94.3 | San Joaquin County | 101.6 |
| Glenn County | 100.9 | San Luis Obispo County | 90.3 |
| Humboldt County | 83.2 | San Mateo County | 85.7 |
| Imperial County | 111.2 | Santa Barbara County | 87.5 |
| Inyo County | 100.8 | Santa Clara County | 92.7 |
| Kern County | 100.8 | Santa Cruz County | 90.0 |
| Kings County | 104.4 | Shasta County | 97.4 |
| Lake County | 97.1 | Sierra County | 88.9 |
| Lassen County | 91.9 | Siskiyou County | 91.4 |
| Los Angeles County | 94.4 | Solano County | 100.2 |
| Madera County | 96.1 | Sonoma County | 93.9 |
| Marin County | 94.4 | Stanislaus County | 101.2 |
| Mariposa County | 94.7 | Sutter County | 104.2 |
| Mendocino County | 90.0 | Tehama County | 99.2 |
| Merced County | 101.8 | Trinity County | 93.9 |
| Modoc County | 92.4 | Tulare County | 92.9 |
| Mono County | 84.4 | Tuolumne County | 88.6 |
| Monterey County | 92.5 | Ventura County | 88.8 |
| Napa County | 98.6 | Yolo County | 103.2 |
| Nevada County | 92.2 | Yuba County | 101.2 |

As this table shows, 41 out of California's 58 counties experience extreme heat effects before temperatures reach 100°F. However, it is important to keep in mind that local extreme heat thresholds can and do vary widely in some counties, particularly those

with coastal and inland communities, so the county-level thresholds cannot be relied upon in determining how best to protect public health.[26] Given the relative nature of extreme heat and significant variations in extreme heat thresholds across the state, the current statewide temperature disconnection threshold of 100°F provides inadequate protection.

### C. Expanding the Current Disconnection Rule to Additionally Rely on the NWS HeatRisk Index Is Reasonable to Protect Utility Consumers from Extreme Heat Dangers.

TURN recommends that the Commission expand the current temperature-related disconnection rule to additionally prohibit disconnections when the NWS HeatRisk index for the customer's location is forecast to reach the "Major" (Red/3) risk-level over the next 72 hours. The NWS HeatRisk provides a forecast of heat-related impacts to occur over a 24-hour period, taking into consideration (1) how unusual the heat is for the time of the year, (2) the duration of heat including both daytime and nighttime temperatures, and (3) if those temperatures pose an elevated risk of heat-related impacts based on data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.[27] The purpose of this NWS tool is to provide risk guidance to decision makers and heat-sensitive populations.[28] The NWS identifies five categories of risk from heat, as shown in the table below (reproduced from https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/):

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[26] For instance, in San Luis Obispo County, the extreme heat threshold is 85 degrees in Morro Bay and 103.3 degrees in Paso Robles. Likewise, in Humboldt County, the extreme heat threshold is 76.9 degrees in Eureka and 97.8 degrees in Garberville. https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat.

[27] National Weather Service, *NWS HeatRisk – Identifying Potential Heat Risks in the Seven Day Forecast*, https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/.

[28] National Weather Service, *NWS HeatRisk – Identifying Potential Heat Risks in the Seven Day Forecast*, https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/.

| Category | Risk of Heat-Related Impacts |
|---|---|
| Green<br>0 | Little to no risk from expected heat. |
| Yellow<br>1 | Minor - This level of heat affects primarily those individuals extremely sensitive to heat, especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. |
| Orange<br>2 | Moderate - This level of heat affects most individuals sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts possible in some health systems and in heat-sensitive industries. |
| Red<br>3 | Major - This level of heat affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts likely in some health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure. |
| Magenta<br>4 | Extreme - This level of rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts likely in most health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure. |

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommends that local health jurisdictions and other community-based service providers use the NWS HeatRisk forecast tool to inform heat safety planning and preparedness.[29] The CDPH has provided additional information about the level of risk, who is at risk, and what actions can be taken for each level of risk, which TURN attaches to this motion.[30] According to the NWS and CDPH, the "Major" (Red/3) risk level means that (1) the forecasted level of heat is dangerous to anyone without proper hydration or adequate cooling, (2) living spaces without air conditioning can become deadly during the afternoon and evening, (3) fans and open windows will not be as effective, and (4) impacts are likely in some health

[29] California Department of Public Health, *Heat Risk Grid: Understanding "HeatRisk" Level, Who is At Risk, and What Actions to Take* (July 27, 2023), https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Heat-Risk-Grid.pdf.

[30] See Attachment 1 (CDPH Heat Risk Grid), available at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Heat-Risk-Grid.pdf.

systems.[31]

Because the energy utilities provide a service that can be life-saving during an extreme heat event, TURN submits that it would be reasonable for the Commission to direct the utilities to use the NWS HeatRisk index in determining when to disconnect residential electric service. This tool is publicly available, free, and provides information at a very localized level.[32] TURN specifically recommends prohibiting disconnections for locations with a HeatRisk "Red" (Major) level. TURN belies that this HeatRisk level is appropriate for a disconnection protection of universal applicability because this risk level indicates that anyone without access to effective cooling is at risk for health effects, with likely impacts on health systems.

TURN acknowledges that the case could also be made for a more protective HeatRisk category ("Orange") to better anticipate the health risks for Californians who are particularly sensitive to heat. The Commission may want to explore in the future adopting procedures to allow customers to self-certify if they have someone in the household who is particularly sensitive to heat (older adults, young children, pregnant individuals, those with chronic health conditions, etc.) but are not enrolled in the Medical Baseline program.[33]

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[31] California Department of Public Health, *Heat Risk Grid: Understanding "HeatRisk" Level, Who is At Risk, and What Actions to Take* (July 27, 2023), https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Heat-Risk-Grid.pdf ; National Weather Service, *NWS HeatRisk – Identifying Potential Heat Risks in the Seven Day Forecast*, https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/.

[32] *See also* CDC "HeatRisk Dashboard", developed in partnership with the NWS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which provides the HeatRisk for the week by zip code. https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/HeatRisk/.

[33] *See* Attachment 1 – CDPH Heat Risk Grid, which identifies populations at higher risk of heat-

### D. The Current Reconnection Rules Do Not Adequately Promote Public Health During Extreme Heat Events.

It is well established that "a loss of utility services causes a significant health and safety concern."[34] These concerns are amplified during extreme heat events, as explained above. To promote access to energy utility services, the Commission has previously adopted policies to reduce the barriers faced by disconnected customers to restoring utility services. The Commission prohibits re-establishment of credit deposits because they "make it increasingly difficult for households to have their utilities reconnected."[35] Similarly, the Commission eliminated reconnection fees for residential customers because "they can be an obstacle to getting utility services restored."[36] But the Commission has not adopted rules regarding the amount of the customer's past due balance that the utility may require the customer to pay before being reconnected. Such requirements may also pose significant barriers to reconnection for some customers.

Most customers who are disconnected for non-payment are reconnected within 24-hours of disconnection, but certainly not all. The following table provides data from PG&E's, SCE's, and SDG&E's most recent monthly disconnection data reports, showing the number of residential customers disconnected each month for non-payment and the number reconnected within 24-hours.[37]

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related health impacts.

[34] D.20-06-003, p. 50.

[35] D.20-06-003, pp. 43-44 (PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, SoCalGas); D.22-08-037, OP 5 (small and multi-jurisdictional utilities).

[36] D.20-06-003, pp. 50-51 (PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, SoCalGas); D.22-08-037, OP 6 (small and multi-jurisdictional utilities).

[37] PG&E Monthly Disconnect Data Request, Jul. 19, 2024, Section 4; SCE Monthly Disconnect Data Report, Jul. 19, 2024, Section 4; SDG&E Disconnection Settlement Monthly Report, Jul.

| | PG&E | | SCE | | SDG&E | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Month (2024) | Disconnects | Reconnects w/in 24 hr. | Disconnects | Reconnects w/in 24 hr. | Disconnects | Reconnects w/in 24 hr. |
| Jan. | 6,848 | 4,378 | 704 | 304 | 1,658 | 954 |
| Feb. | 13,292 | 8,742 | 2,883 | 1,230 | 279 | 127 |
| Mar. | 11,035 | 7,595 | 5,982 | 2,855 | 4,767 | 2,940 |
| Apr. | 17,102 | 11,954 | 7,526 | 3,857 | 3,922 | 2,750 |
| May | 16,442 | 12,475 | 7,072 | 3,927 | 2,005 | 1,513 |
| Jun. | 15,980 | 10,757 | 5,008 | 3,249 | 2,132 | 1,506 |

An additional fraction of customers disconnected in these months was reconnected within 48, 72, or more hours, but not all.[38] While it is unclear why more customers are not reconnected within 24-hours of disconnection, it is reasonable to assume that the utility's payment requirements are a barrier.

Customers who have experienced disconnection for non-payment but are not able to afford to pay a lump sum to reconnect cannot run air conditioning or fans during extreme heat events. They, too, need the Commission's protection from potentially life-threatening consequences of living without power during extreme heat.

### E. Reducing the Barriers to Reconnection When Extreme Heat is Anticipated Is Reasonable to Protect Utility Consumers from Extreme Heat Dangers.

TURN recommends that the Commission augment the existing reconnection rules to promote restoration of service in anticipation of (or during) an extreme heat event. The Commission should require the electric utilities to contact recently disconnected

22, 2024, Section 4.

[38] *See* PG&E Monthly Disconnect Data Request, Jul. 19, 2024, Section 4; SCE Monthly Disconnect Data Report, Jul. 19, 2024, Section 4; SDG&E Disconnection Settlement Monthly Report, Jul. 22, 2024, Section 4.

customers living in areas where TURN's proposed NWS HeatRisk index criteria is met and offer to reconnect service *without any minimum payment*, as long as the customer agrees to a payment plan for the arrearage. To start, customers disconnected within the last 60 days should be eligible for this consumer protection.

This interim emergency measure is a reasonable way to reduce health and safety risks for customers who have fallen behind on bills and lack access to electric service.

### F. Extreme Heat Disconnection Protections Will Be Necessary Until Utility Bills Are Affordable for All Californians.

Extreme heat events will continue to increase in California, making access to utility service more critical than ever to protect public health.[39] At the same time, residential electric rates have been on a dramatic upward trajectory, with no assurances from the Commission that rates will precipitously fall anytime soon.[40] Given these circumstances, the Commission must be vigilant about adapting its disconnection-related consumer protection policies to align with today's reality, where Californians need access to electricity to cool their homes more than ever before but some will be less able to afford it. At the same time, the Commission must also exercise its full authority to

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[39] *See, e.g.,* Cal-Adapt – Extreme Heat Days & Warm Nights, ("For most areas around the state, the climate models project a significant rise in the number of days exceeding what is now considered extremely hot for the given area."), https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat.

[40] *See, e.g.,* The Public Advocates Office, *Q2 2024 Electric Rates Report* (Jul. 22, 2024), p. 5 (showing 3-year increases in average residential rates (Jan. 2021-Jul. 2024) of 51%, 51%, and 20% for PG&E, SCE, and SDG&E, respectively, and 10-year (Jan. 2014-Jul. 2024) increases of 110%, 90%, and 82% for PG&E, SCE, and SDG&E, respectively), https://www.publicadvocates.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cal-advocates-website/files/press-room/reports-and-analyses/240722-public-advocates-office-q2-2024-electric-rates-report.pdf; CPUC, *2023 California Electric and Gas Utility Costs Report: AB 67 Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature* (April 2024), p. 10 (showing average annual changes in electric bundled system average rates from 2019-2023 of 13.8% for SCE, 10.5% for PG&E, and 12.5% for SDG&E), https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/divisions/office-of-governmental-affairs-division/reports/2024/2023-ab-67-report.pdf.

reduce utility revenue requirements in other proceedings where utility spending is at issue, bringing rates down so that all Californians can afford to keep the power on.

## III. CONCLUSION

Extreme heat events are creating serious health risks for Californians without power. While the Commission has a rule addressing disconnections during extreme temperatures, that rule does not adequately align with the dangers of extreme heat events, as explained above. The Commission should modify the existing extreme temperature disconnection rule on an *emergency interim basis*, as proposed by TURN, to better protect public health for the remainder of this hot weather season. TURN's proposals include (1) adding a prohibition on disconnections when the NWS HeatRisk index indicates a "Major" public health risk from extreme heat in the next 72 hours in the location of the impending disconnection, and (2) requiring the utilities to reconnect customers facing those same weather conditions, without any advance payment, if the customer agrees to a payment plan. When the threat of extreme heat events subsides in the next few months, the Commission can undertake a more thorough examination of whether to extend or modify the interim emergency rules to align the Commission's consumer protection policies with the new reality of extreme heat events in California.

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Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/
Hayley Goodson

**The Utility Reform Network**
360 Grand Avenue, #150
Oakland, CA 94610
Phone: (415) 929-8876
Fax: (415) 912-1422
Email: hayley@turn.org

# ATTACHMENT 1

## California Department of Public Health "Heat Risk Grid"

# CDPH Heat Risk Grid: Understanding "HeatRisk" Level, Who is At Risk, and What Actions to Take

*Revised July 27, 2023. Adapted from the National Weather Service (NWS) HeatRisk tool. Learn more about how to stay safe during extreme heat at CDPH Extreme Heat.*

| Value | Risk | What does this mean? | Who / What is at risk? | What actions can be taken? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0** (Green) | **Little to None** | • This level of heat poses **little to no risk** from expected heat | • No elevated risk | • No preventative actions necessary |
| 1 (Yellow) | **Minor** | • Heat of this type is **tolerated by most**; however, there is a **minor risk for extremely heat-sensitive groups*** to experience negative heat-related health effects | • **Primarily those who are extremely sensitive to heat,*** especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration | • Increase hydration<br>• Reduce time spent outdoors or stay in the shade when the sun is strongest<br>• Open windows at night and use fans |
| **2** (Orange) | **Moderate** | • Heat of this type is tolerated by many; however, there is a **moderate risk for members of heat-sensitive groups*** to experience negative heat-related health effects, including heat illness<br>• **Some risk for the general population who are exposed to the sun for longer periods of time**<br>• **Living spaces without air conditioning can become uncomfortable during the afternoon and evening**, but fans and leaving windows open at night will help | • **Primarily heat-sensitive or heat-vulnerable groups,*** especially those without effective cooling or hydration<br>• Those not acclimatized to this level of heat (i.e., visitors)<br>• Otherwise healthy individuals exposed to longer duration heat, without effective cooling or hydration, such as in the sun at an outdoor venue<br>• Some transportation and utilities sectors<br>• Some health systems will see increased demand, with increases in emergency room visits | • Reduce time in the sun during the warmest part of the day<br>• Stay hydrated<br>• Stay in a cool place during the heat of the day (usually 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)<br>• Move outdoor activities to cooler times of the day<br>• For those without air conditioning, use fans to keep air moving and open windows at night to bring cooler air inside buildings |
| **3** (Red) | **Major** | • Heat of this type represents a **major risk to all individuals who are 1) exposed to the sun and active or 2) are in a heat-sensitive group**<br>• **Dangerous to anyone without proper hydration or adequate cooling**<br>• **Living spaces without air conditioning can become deadly during the afternoon and evening. Fans and open windows will not be as effective.**<br>• **Poor air quality** is possible<br>• **Power interruptions** may occur | • **Much of the population, especially anyone without effective cooling or hydration**<br>• Those exposed to the heat/sun at outdoor venues<br>• Health systems likely to see increased demand with significant increases in emergency room visits<br>• Most transportation and utilities sectors | • **Cancel outdoor activities during the heat of the day**** (usually 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.), and move activities to the coolest parts of the day<br>• Stay hydrated<br>• Stay in a cool place especially during the heat of the day and evening<br>• If you have access to air conditioning, use it, or find a location that does. Even a few hours in a cool location can lower risk. Fans may not be adequate. |
| **4** (Magenta) | **Extreme** | • This is a rare level of heat leading to an **extreme risk for the entire population**<br>• **Very dangerous to anyone without proper hydration or adequate cooling**<br>• This is a **multi-day excessive heat event**. A prolonged period of heat is dangerous for everyone not prepared<br>• **Poor air quality** is likely<br>• **Power outages are increasingly likely** as electrical demands may reach critical levels | • **Entire population exposed to the heat is at risk**<br>• For people without effective cooling, especially heat-sensitive groups, **this level of heat can be deadly**<br>• Health systems highly likely to see increased demand with significant increases in emergency room visits<br>• Most transportation and utilities sectors | • **Cancel outdoor activities****<br>• Stay hydrated<br>• Stay in a cool place, including overnight<br>• If you have access to air conditioning, use it, or find a location that does. Even a few hours in a cool location can lower risk. Fans will not be adequate.<br>• Check on your neighbors |

**Populations at higher risk of heat-related health impacts include older adults, young children, unhoused residents, those with chronic health conditions, outdoor workers, those exercising or doing strenuous activities outdoors during the heat of the day, pregnant individuals, those living in low-income communities, and more.*

*** For Extreme (Magenta/4) and Major (Red/3) risk levels, CDPH recommends more caution and therefore guides canceling outdoor activities based on these scenarios.*