



California Public Utilities Commission
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PRESS RELEASE

Docket #: R.18-10-007

CPUC ISSUES PROPOSAL REQUIRING UTILITIES TO CONDUCT MULTI-CULTURAL OUTREACH FOR WILDFIRES

SAN FRANCISCO, February 5, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), in ongoing actions to help utilities mitigate the risks of wildfires, today issued a proposal that, if approved by the CPUC’s Commissioners, would require utilities to conduct outreach to the public before, during, and after a wildfire in all languages prevalent in their service territories.

Communication before, during, and after a wildfire may be a life or death matter. People cannot act on outreach they cannot understand; public safety requires that outreach actually reach the intended audience. Outreach that is not in-language simply will not be effective in protecting all California residents. Today’s proposal would require the utilities to reach out to customers in multiple languages if that language is spoken by 1,000 or more persons in the investor-owned utility’s service territory.

The first opportunity for the proposal issued today to come before the CPUC’s Commissioners for a vote is March 12, 2020. The proposal is available at <http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Efile/G000/M326/K281/326281950.PDF>. Members of the public can comment on the proposal by emailing public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov and referring to proceeding number R.18-10-007.

The CPUC’s work on wildfire issues continues in several forums, including its proceedings on Disaster Relief (R.18-03-011), Microgrids and Resiliency (R.19-09-009), Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS; (R.18-12-005), and various proceedings focused on investigating past wildfire and PSPS events.



The CPUC's new Wildfire Safety Division will review utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans due on February 7, 2020, and will issue a proposal (called a "Draft Resolution") on May 7, 2020, recommending approval or denial of plans. Once utilities file plans, members of the public may submit comments to wildfiresafetydivision@cpuc.ca.gov by April 7, 2020. The CPUC's Commissioners are expected to vote on the Wildfire Safety Division's proposal in June.

CPUC Actions

The CPUC has taken a number of steps help utilities mitigate the threat of wildfires and to hold utilities accountable for PSPS events and minimize the impacts of future PSPS events, including:

- **Improve PG&E PPS Operating Protocols:** Ordered Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to update its PPS operating protocols and, at the discretion of the CPUC, be prepared to exercise them in collaboration with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and CPUC staff. PG&E must also be prepared to hold a no-notice exercise to go through the process of executing on all necessary elements for an actual PPS event;
- **Establish Working Groups:** Ordered PG&E to establish working groups with tribal and local governments across PG&E's service territory in which the needs of tribal and local governments during, before, and after a PPS event are identified and addressed. PG&E must also develop its 2020 PPS protocols using feedback from the working groups;
- **Improve PPS Guidelines:** Issued for public comment on Jan. 30, 2020, proposed guidelines from CPUC staff that the state's investor-owned utilities would be required to follow, if approved by the CPUC, in order to ensure improved communication with their customers before and during PPS events and to minimize the impact to customers when PPS events are implemented by utilities;
- **Make Immediate Corrective Actions:** Ordered PG&E to take a multitude of immediate corrective actions after it encountered significant problems with communication, coordination, and management during the largest PPS event in the history of California in October 2019;
- **Question Top Utility Executives:** Called an emergency meeting in October 2019 to publicly address the mistakes and operational gaps identified in PG&E's October PPS events and to provide lessons learned to ensure they are not repeated;



- **Question Top Communications Executives:** Held a hearing on the operations of communications companies during the October PSPS events;
- **Investigate:** Launched a formal investigation to determine whether investor-owned utilities prioritized safety and complied with the CPUC’s regulations and requirements with respect to their PSPS events in late 2019 ([I.19-11-013](#));
- **Re-Examine Protocols:** Began an examination of PSPS protocol ([R.18-12-005](#));
- **Do Not Charge for Services Not Provided:** Implementing measures to ensure utilities do not collect from their customers the charges that are a part of every customer’s bill so that customers are not charged for services they do not receive during PSPS events;
- **Expand Wildfire Mitigation Plans to Reduce Need for PSPS:** Directed utilities to expand their 2020 [Wildfire Mitigation Plans](#) to focus on increasing the safe performance of utilities, reduce the need for PSPS events, create more resilient communities, and provide results before the next wildfire season; and,
- **Emergency Disaster Relief:** Establishing an emergency disaster relief program for entities under CPUC jurisdiction ([R.18-03-011](#)).

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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