



California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, [news@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:news@cpuc.ca.gov)

**PRESS RELEASE**

Docket #: R.18-12-005

## **CPUC ENHANCES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION FOR UTILITY PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUT-OFF EVENTS**

SAN FRANCISCO, May 28, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today adopted new public safety measures that direct utilities to enhance their communication and collaboration with communities at risk of being impacted by a Public Safety Power Shut-off (PSPS) event and to implement additional measures that would minimize the duration and impact of PSPS events in advance of the 2020 wildfire season.

The updated guidelines seek to address issues that arose during the utilities' execution of their 2019 PSPS events. Specifically, these additional prescriptions intend to ensure utilities are taking the necessary steps to comprehend and address community needs as part of their PSPS planning and execution, and to minimize the duration and impact of a PSPS event on communities. The guidelines go into effect immediately and require progress reports by the utilities within two months, a critical requirement given the consideration of the current COVID-19 pandemic and response potentially coinciding with the wildfire season.

### **Guidelines to Ensure Utilities are Better Comprehending and Addressing Needs of Impacted Communities**

Utilities are required to:

- Establish quarterly regionalized **working groups and advisory boards** with local communities, access and functional needs representatives, and public safety partners to ensure that utilities hear directly from impacted communities and experts in public safety on the effects of PSPS on communities and incorporate the feedback into their PSPS planning.



- **Work with communities to develop communication and notification plans** and ensure the utilities' websites allow the public to access precise locality information of potential and active PSPS event-impacted service points.
- **Provide communications carriers with meter and circuit IDs to be de-energized and re-energized in advance of taking action** to ensure communication carriers can deploy resources to minimize the impact of PSPS events on communications infrastructure.
- **Identify people who may be at medical or safety risk of an extended power outage, above and beyond those on a utility's Medical Baseline rate** and work in collaboration with public safety partners, local governments, and representatives of people/communities with access and functional needs to identify assistance required by current and potentially eligible Medical Baseline customers during PSPS events.
- **Plan and execute PSPS exercises in areas with highest historical and forecasted risk of PSPS** in coordination with the CPUC, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), and representatives of access and functional needs communities.

## **Guidelines to Minimize the Duration and Impact of PSPS Events on Communities**

Utilities are required to:

- Finalize a **Community Resource Centers** plan within 60 days based on local demographic data for meeting a variety of safety needs for the access and functional needs community. Community Resource Centers should, at a minimum, provide device charging stations, cellular network services, water, chairs, PSPS information representatives, and restrooms, and must be operable from at least 8 a.m.-10 p.m. during a PSPS event.
- **Restore service after PSPS events** as soon as possible and within 24 hours from the termination of a PSPS event, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Work with local, tribal, federal and state government agencies, and other private and public sector parties to **identify critical transportation, telecommunications, and water system infrastructure** located in PSPS-prone areas requiring backup generation to ensure that critical infrastructure is not brought offline during a PSPS event.



“The state cannot experience PSPS events on the scope and scale we experienced in 2019,” said CPUC President Marybel Batjer. “Through the guidelines adopted today, the CPUC is holding the utilities to a higher standard and expects them to prepare for and execute PSPS events in a manner that greatly reduces impacts on Californians.”

“The lack of coordination and communication that happened last fall was appalling. Utilities carried out PSPS events without adequate foresight or warning, and many impacted communities experienced extreme hardships as a result. The effects were especially devastating to the medically vulnerable and their families,” said Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves. “Our Decision today focuses on how to further reduce the use of utility PSPS events and how to mitigate their impacts. At the core of many elements of our Decision is communication and planning -- with first responders, local governments, tribal governments, community choice aggregators, and customers. Utilities need to fundamentally understand and appreciate the value of these relationships, and this Decision sets tighter thresholds to ensure that these basic measures are taken in a timely manner.”

Said Commissioner Clifford Rechtschaffen, “These updated guidelines will increase public safety by improving communication between communities and utilities, adding clearer rules for setting up Community Resource Centers, and requiring improved notice of PSPS events.”

Said Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma, “I appreciate that our decision strengthens requirements regarding advance notification, especially for communications providers. It is essential that we do everything we can to keep communication networks up and running during utility PSPS events.”

Today’s Decision follows a May 2019 CPUC Decision ([D.19-05-042](#)) that adopted PSPS communication and notification guidelines for electric investor-owned utilities and presented the CPUC’s overarching de-energization strategy, along with updates to the requirements established in [Resolution ESRB-8](#). For more information, visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov/deenergization](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/deenergization).

The proposal voted on is available at:

<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M338/K611/338611785.PDF>.



Documents related to this proceeding are available at:

[https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:0::NO:RP,57,RIR:P5\\_PROCEEDING\\_SELECT:R1812005](https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:0::NO:RP,57,RIR:P5_PROCEEDING_SELECT:R1812005).

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, protects consumers, 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).

###

