



California Public Utilities Commission  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

Docket #: R.18-03-011

## **CPUC REQUIRES WIRELESS COMPANIES TO BETTER SERVE CUSTOMERS IN EMERGENCIES**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 16, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), in its ongoing efforts to help utilities better protect customers during emergencies, today ordered California’s wireless companies to develop comprehensive resiliency plans to ensure necessary planning and network investments are made to maintain service to customers during a disaster or power outage, including Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS).

“Last October, Californians who were already impacted by power shut-offs were forced to evacuate their homes as the Kincade Fire burned uncontrolled. In moments like these, Californians rely on their cell phones to receive alerts from emergency responders and access vital evacuation websites,” said CPUC President Marybel Batjer. “Today’s Decision creates a framework to ensure that wireless networks will provide reliable access to 9-1-1, 2-1-1, emergency alerts, and crucial Internet services that are so critical to public safety and well-being in times of disaster.”

During the October and November 2019 wildfire and PSPS events, widespread reports of communications outages across all sectors were reported. Significant outages occurred on the networks supporting mobile, cable, Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) communications, and Internet traffic. For example, 57 percent of cell sites in Marin County were out of service between October 26 and 27, 2019. Without access to 911 and the ability to reach first responders, Californians cannot access needed services, be safe, or even function in an emergency.

Under today’s Decision, wireless providers must:

- Submit to the CPUC within 60 days **emergency operations plans** that detail their protocols for responding to a disaster, to the CPUC, the California Governor’s Office of Emergency



Services (Cal OES), and local emergency response agencies. Wireless providers must also provide emergency points of contact, verification of annual emergency preparedness exercises, and plans for communicating with the public during disasters and outages impacting their networks. These plans must be updated and filed annually.

- Adopt a 72-hour **backup power requirement** to ensure that a minimum level of service and coverage is maintained during disasters or power outages in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts. Wireless providers must have this infrastructure ready for use within 12 months.
- File comprehensive **Communications Resiliency Plans** with the CPUC that detail their ability to maintain a minimum level of service and coverage during a disaster or power outage. The plans must detail their use of an array of strategies, including backup power, redundancy, network hardening, temporary facilities, preparedness planning, and communication and coordination with other utilities, emergency responders, and the public. Minimum level of service and coverage includes 9-1-1 service, 2-1-1 service, ability to receive emergency alerts and warnings, and to access evacuation and de-energization websites. Wireless providers must submit these plans within 6 months.

Today’s action builds on [proposals](#) issued in March by President Batjer and a series of communications customer protection requirements the CPUC approved in a prior Decision ([D.19-08-025](#)). That Decision determined that the wildfires of 2017, 2018, and 2019, as well as the PSPS events initiated by utilities, revealed failures in California’s communications network that resulted in a loss of service to customers and endangered the lives of customers and first responders.

“Wireless networks are critical infrastructure for emergency response. Recent events have demonstrated that the days of short, temporary back-up power are behind us and that outages are not an option. We must move forward with efficient back-up power and resilient networks,” said Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves.

“Increasing wireless subscriptions in our LifeLine program show us that many of California’s most vulnerable populations rely on cell phones in an emergency,” said Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma. “Today’s Decision is critical to ensuring that these phones remain a true lifeline in times of crisis.”



In a forthcoming proposal the CPUC will consider resiliency requirements for wireline providers.

The proposal voted on is available at

<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M343/K633/343633733.PDF>.

Documents related to the proceeding are available at

[https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:0::NO:RP,57,RIR:P5\\_PROCEEDING\\_SELECT:R1803011](https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:0::NO:RP,57,RIR:P5_PROCEEDING_SELECT:R1803011).

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).

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