



California Public Utilities Commission
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PRESS RELEASE

Docket #: R.18-04-019

CPUC REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO DISADVANTAGED VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLANNING

SAN FRANCISCO, August 27, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today took steps to ensure California’s energy utilities minimize the impacts of utility infrastructure, operations, and service changes due to changing climate conditions for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the state.

Climate change adaptation planning is increasingly vital in a time of worsening climate impacts for many California communities. Today’s Decision provides guidelines on how CPUC-regulated energy utilities should make decisions on California’s vulnerabilities caused by climate change, and addresses how the utilities should engage with Disadvantaged Vulnerable Communities (DVCs) on climate adaptation so that every community is treated equitably across the State. Specifically, today’s Decision:

- Requires investor-owned utilities to pay special attention to DVCs when utilities begin to make infrastructure, operational, and service changes as part of their climate adaptation efforts, which consists of the 25 percent highest scoring census tracts according to the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen), all California tribal lands, census tracts with median household incomes less than 60 percent of the state median income, and census tracts that score in the highest 5 percent of Pollution Burden within CalEnviroScreen;
- Requires utilities to lead community engagements with DVCs and develop plans as utilities develop vulnerability assessments due to climate change variables such as sea level changes, extreme temperatures, variations in precipitation (snowpack, drought, and subsidence), and wildfires;



- Directs utilities to submit vulnerability assessments every four years according to their General Rate Case cycles that focus on: climate risks, operations, service, and utility assets; options for dealing with vulnerabilities; climate risk exposure of contracted third-party facilities for power, capacity, or reliability; green and sustainable remedies; and how to promote equity in DVCs;
- Orders utilities to set up “Climate Adaptation Vulnerability Assessment Memorandum Accounts” to track costs related to the vulnerability assessment; and,
- Orders utilities to create climate change teams across departments with cross-departmental responsibilities.

Today’s Decision is the second and final of two decisions in Phase I of the CPUC’s proceeding and addresses Topic 4: Identification and prioritization of actions to address the climate change related needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, and Topic 5: Framework for climate-related decision-making and accountability.

On April 26, 2018, the CPUC opened proceeding R.18-04-019 to integrate climate change adaptation matters in relevant CPUC proceedings. Safeguarding California’s utility access against climate threats is a major undertaking, and the CPUC anticipates multiple phases to deal with aspects of the water, telecommunication, electric, and natural gas utilities. Phase 1 addresses issues affecting electric and gas utilities, but includes some issues that are applicable to all utilities.

“This is new territory for us, and I look forward to seeing the analysis that comes out this process, and how it can inform future strategic planning. Now, even more urgently than ever before, it is imperative that we get ahead of the curve, and start planning now, so that we can do our best to ensure public safety, minimize costs, and achieve equitable outcomes as we experience this major shift in our climate,” said CPUC Commissioner Liane M. Randolph, the assigned Commissioner for the proceeding.

“Climate change is here. This Decision sets the groundwork for rigorous climate adaptation planning within the utilities and the communities they serve. This is essential even as we continue to make progress towards a zero greenhouse gas footprint by the year 2045,” said Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma.



The proposal voted on is available at:

<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M345/K697/345697117.PDF>.

Documents related to the proceeding are at:

https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:0::NO:RP,57,RIR:P5_PROCEEDING_SELECT:R1804019.

For more information, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov/climatechangeadaptation.

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.

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