



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Docket #: R.18-12-005

CPUC ISSUES ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES AND RULES IN CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENTS TO UTILITY EXECUTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFFS

SAN FRANCISCO, June 24, 2021 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today enhanced and updated existing guidelines and rules for utility Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events in advance of the 2021 wildfire season. As a result, electric investor-owned utilities are now required to take a results-based approach to improving notification and mitigating the impacts of PSPS events.

In implementing de-energization as a wildfire mitigation strategy, the utilities must balance the risk of harm from utility-ignited wildfires against the public harms of shutting off power. “The loss of power means loss of income, loss of a day or more of learning, and fear and uncertainty for those who rely on power to sustain life supporting medical devices,” said CPUC President Marybel Batjer. “The decision by a utility to initiate a PSPS event must always be a measure of last resort.”

The additional guidelines and rules ordered today will augment existing directives to better address some of the issues that arose during the utilities’ execution of their 2020 PSPS events. Specifically, the additional guidelines and rules are intended to ensure utilities are continually improving planning, preparation, and access to resources during PSPS events and enhancing notification of, and mitigating impacts on, all customers with particular focus on access and functional needs and vulnerable populations.

Guidelines to Improve Planning, Preparation, and Access to Resources During PSPS Events

Under the new guidelines and rules, utilities must:



1. Conduct annual **PSPS Exercises** that use the same channels of decision-making, knowledge transfer, implementation, and communication that would be used in an actual PSPS event.
2. Include additional entities under the definition of **Critical Facilities and Infrastructure** to ensure that entities essential to public safety receive advance notification of PSPS events and additional assistance in assessing the need for backup generation to ensure resiliency during de-energization.
3. Provide the following at **Community Resource Centers (CRCs)**: device charging stations that are capable of powering medical devices, cellular network services, water, chairs, PSPS information representatives, and restrooms.

Guidelines to Enhance Notification of, and Mitigate Impacts on Access and Functional Needs and Vulnerable Populations

Under the new guidelines and rules, utilities must:

1. Administer a program to support **resiliency** for customers that rely on electricity to maintain necessary life functions, including durable medical equipment and assistive technology. The program must provide adequate and appropriate support **for the anticipated duration** of a PSPS event.
2. Utility representatives at the Senior Vice President level must meet at least quarterly with representatives of Access and Functional Needs state agencies and community-based organizations to develop, implement, and review each utility's **annual Access and Functional Needs plan**.
3. Conduct **annual surveys** of customers with access and functional needs to assess whether they were aware of PSPS events and resources available to them and were able to utilize electric equipment to maintain necessary life functions for the duration of any de-energization events. These surveys will also solicit feedback from customers with access and functional needs on how the utilities can provide PSPS notifications more effectively. To the extent possible, the utilities must track and report survey **results according to specific access or functional needs**, for instance persons with a vision impairment as distinct from persons with a developmental disability.

The new guidelines and rules are in effect immediately and require annual reporting to increase transparency into the utilities' planning and execution of PSPS events. Specifically, the utilities must



submit an annual Pre-Season Report to the CPUC that details actions taken by the utilities to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of future PSPS events, and an annual Post-Season Report that provides data on customer-focused outcomes during prior year PSPS events.

“Public Safety Power Shutoffs are a wildfire mitigation strategy of last resort, so it is all the more essential to have clear expectations in place so that the most vulnerable among us, including Medical Baseline customers, have their needs served should that last resort be called in,” said Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma.

The CPUC will hold meetings with electric investor-owned utilities on their PSPS preparation efforts in early August. These meetings will be open to the public and details will be forthcoming.

Today’s decision was informed by stakeholder participation in this proceeding and a series of public meetings held by the CPUC in January and March that focused on assessing the utilities’ 2020 performance. It also builds upon prior PSPS directives issued by the CPUC. Most recently, a May 2020 CPUC Decision ([D.20-05-051](#)) issued in this proceeding adopted guidelines and rules to ensure utilities better comprehend and address the needs of impacted communities and are minimizing the duration and impact of PSPS events on communities. Previously, a May 2019 CPUC Decision ([D.19-05-042](#)) adopted PSPS communication and notification guidelines and rules for utilities and presented the CPUC’s overarching de-energization strategy, along with updates to the requirements established by the CPUC in Resolution [ESRB-8](#) (July 12, 2018). For more information, visit www.cpuc.ca.gov/psps.

The proposal voted on is available at:

<https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M388/K800/388800156.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.

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.



###

