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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Implement Electric Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans Pursuant to Senate Bill 901 (2018).	Rulemaking 18-10-007 (Filed October 25, 2018)

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE'S COMMENTS ON THE WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLANS

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The California Environmental Justice Alliance ("CEJA") respectfully submits these comments in response to Pacific Gas & Electric Company's ("PG&E's"), Southern California Edison's ("SCE's"), and San Diego Gas & Electric Company's ("SDG&E's") Wildfire Mitigation Plans. Due to limits of time and space, CEJA focused on these three utilities. These comments are timely filed pursuant to the Scoping Ruling and follow the agreed upon outline.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

As recent history shows, wildfires have the potential to cause horrible catastrophes. Yet, certain communities throughout the state are less prepared and more vulnerable to the devastation these fires cause. Communities that are linguistically isolated, that lack the resources to evacuate, and that already breathe unhealthy air are more likely than other communities to be devastated by a disaster. And when a disaster strikes, low-income community members that work in businesses impacted or destroyed by fires are less likely to be able to afford their energy bills while transitioning to new work or residence.

In this proceeding, the Commission is charged with reviewing utility plans to mitigate the potential of catastrophic wildfires caused by utility equipment. The purposes of Commission review are to verify that the plans meet all current requirements, and to approve the plans' components, as specified by statute, in a short three-month time frame. The Commission is not required to determine whether particular projects are just and reasonable; those decisions must be made in the general rate case. Senate Bill 901 further specifies that the Commission's review be focused on those actions necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfires. As such, CEJA urges the Commission to narrowly focus its approval on those elements of the plan necessary to meet the plain language of the statute and to mitigate the potential of catastrophic wildfires.

CEJA has five general, overarching comments on the plans. First, we urge the Commission to require the utilities to consider the increased risks faced by vulnerable communities when deciding how to prioritize hardening. Our narrow request in this cycle is that utilities include increased risk from socioeconomic status as a factor when deciding the sequence of hardening activities. This will not increase costs and is necessary to ensure that more vulnerable communities are not last in line for hardening work, which at least one utility believes will take up to 10 years. Second, we urge the Commission to strengthen the requirements for notification when a fire occurs. The notification requirements for a fire that implicates utility equipment should be at least as strong as those required for de-energization events. Third, we request that the Commission focus its approval on situational awareness that helps ensure ignitions do not lead to catastrophes, by requiring utilities to achieve best practices as shown by SDG&E and requiring metrics that evaluate situational awareness. Fourth, we request that the Commission not approve new vegetation and hardening projects that have not been shown to effectively reduce fire risk. Utilities should be required to complete pilot projects to show their effectiveness before the entire scope of their projects are approved in future cycles. Ratepayers, especially low-income ratepayers, should not be required to pay for programs that are not demonstrated to be effective at reducing risks in a meaningful way. Fifth, we request that utilities continue to develop ways to ensure low-income community members are not disconnected from service when their community is impacted by a fire. The current requirements fail to consider the real-world impact that fires can have on a community.

Consideration of the human impact of wildfires is essential to mitigate both the potential catastrophic wildfires and the damages should one occur. With these recommendations, we believe that approval of the plans will set the state in the right direction to mitigate the potential of catastrophic wildfires.

1. WHAT DOES COMMISSION APPROVAL MEAN

Consistent with the language of SB 901, the Commission should specify that the scope of its approval is narrow in this Wildfire Mitigation Plan ("WMP") cycle by: (A) clarifying that its decision does not impact the Commission's future evaluations of whether a utility was reasonable and prudent; (B) describing and limiting the scope of the compliance requirement of its approval; (C) limiting its approval to projects or actions that are either required or have been

shown to be effective at mitigating wildfire impacts; and (D) limiting its approval to focus on actions and projects that mitigate the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

A. The Commission's WMP Approval Does Not Impact Future Evaluations of Whether a Utility Is Reasonable and Prudent or Future Enforcement Actions.

Before defining the scope of Commission approval, it is important for the Commission to clarify the things that approval of the WMPs does not impact under SB 901. Where the language of a statute is clear and unambiguous as it is here, there is no need to look further than the plain language, giving words their ordinary meaning.[1]

First, the Commission's approval of the WMPs is not a sole determinant, or even one of the primary determinants, of an eventual Commission determination of whether a utility is reasonable and prudent. Although SB 901 lists compliance with the WMP as one of the many factors the Commission should consider when assessing reasonableness and prudency,[2] it is by no means the only factor. Rather, the Code details twelve distinct factors, including a factor that examines compliance with the WMP, that the Commission must consider and balance when judging whether a utility was reasonable and prudent in relation to a wildfire.[3] Thus, arguments that reasonable and prudent should be based solely on whether utilities "substantially" comply with the WMP should be rejected as inconsistent with the plain language of the statute and outside the scope of this proceeding.[4]

Second, the Code further clarifies that Commission approval of a WMP does "not establish a defense to any enforcement action for violation of a commission decision, order, or rule."[5] Therefore, the Commission's approval of the plan should not in any way limit the Commission's actions or investigations in other proceedings. Although the WMP should create a plan for meeting relevant requirements, it cannot and does not anticipate every specific action necessary to behave in a way that meets every requirement on utilities with respect to wildfires.

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[1] *See, e.g., People v. Canty* (2004) 32 Cal.4th 1266, 1276.
[2] *See* Cal. Public Util. Code § 451.1.
[3] Cal. Public Util. Code § 451.1. Section 451.1 lists 12 factors that should be evaluated when determining whether a utility was reasonable and prudent including "[t]he electrical corporation's compliance with regulation, laws, commission orders, and its wildfire plans prepared pursuant to Section 8386, including its history of compliance." Cal. Public Util. Code § 451.1(b)(9).
[4] Notably, language that would have required the Commission to evaluate reasonable and prudent based on substantial compliance with the WMP was in legislation, SB 1088 (Dodd), which did not pass last legislative cycle. Any attempt to introduce language from failed legislation is improper.
[5] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(f).

B. The Commission's WMP Approval Will Create a Narrow Compliance Requirement in this Proceeding.

Although SB 901 limits the impact of the WMP approval in other proceedings, SB 901 clearly intends for the utilities to follow their plans. In particular, SB 901 states that the Commission's approval will create a compliance requirement, noting that the Commission can stagger "compliance periods for each corporation."[6] SB 901 further requires the Commission to "conduct an annual review of each electrical corporation's compliance with its plan" and for each utility to "engage an independent evaluator" to "review and assess" the utility's "compliance with its plan."[7] If a utility is not in substantial compliance with its plan, the Commission is required to assess a penalty.[8]

To assess compliance and penalties, SB 901 requires an analysis of factors including whether the "noncompliance resulted in harm," whether the utility self-reported the "circumstances," whether the utility implemented corrective actions, and whether the utility "had previously engaged in conduct of a similar nature that caused significant property damage or injury."[9] As shown by this language, SB 901 hinges on evaluation of the harm that occurs from a utility's actions, circumstances that may cause harm, self-corrections, and exercise of reasonable care. These factors are not focused, for example, on the specific amount of hardening done, but rather on how well the system is working at preventing wildfires.

Consistent with these factors, we urge the Commission to limit its WMP approval and the metrics associated with that approval and eventual compliance review to actions and projects that are necessary to meet current requirements or that have been demonstrated, in practice, to be effective for mitigating wildfire risk. We further urge the Commission to tie the metrics for evaluating the WMPs directly to the utility's ability to mitigate harm under its plan and the utility's response consistent with the language of SB 901.[10]

C. The Commission Should Limit Its Approval to Projects and Actions Previously Required or Shown to Be Effective for Mitigating Wildfire Risk.

The Commission has been evaluating issues related to wildfire safety and mitigation for years. Through these processes, the Commission has developed a series of decisions and

[6] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(b).
[7] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(h).
[8] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386.1.
[9] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386.1.
[10] *See infra*, Section 6 (discussing metrics for evaluating the plan).

guidelines, such as General Order 95, that delineate the minimum requirements utilities should meet to mitigate the potential of catastrophic wildfires. The passage of SB 901 requiring a wildfire mitigation plan does not in any way mean that the Commission should disregard its years of work in relation to preventing and planning for potential wildfires. In fact, SB 901 explicitly requires that the Commission "verify that the plan complies with all applicable rules, regulations, and standards, as appropriate."[11] As legislative history confirms, SB 901 is intended to require an "expansion" of the current plans and requirements, not a wholesale rewriting of the plans.[12] As such, the WMPs should reflect a one-stop shop of all relevant actions a utility is taking to reduce catastrophic wildfire risk by including largely the requirements from prior proceedings and Commission orders.

Importantly, within the three-month approval deadline, SB 901 does not require that the Commission approve all elements of the proposed plan—rather SB 901 explicitly allows the Commission to modify the plans.[13] SB 901 further requires that the reasonableness and the "cost of implementing" the WMPs be considered in the general rate case.[14] This must not be undermined. As SB 901's legislative history aptly states: "[r]eview of utility expenses to ensure they are just and reasonable is the primary purpose for the CPUC's existence and the main task of the agency as an economic regulator."[15] Because the WMPs evaluation is bifurcated between this proceeding and the general rate case, the Commission can focus this proceeding on ensuring that the plans meet the basic SB 901 requirements and reflect best practices that implementation of existing programs have already been shown to be effective. Then, the Commission can focus its evaluation of the actual scope of the projects and their specific costs in the general rate case.

In general, the potential actions and projects delineated in the plans fall into three categories: (1) actions and projects necessary to meet current Commission and state requirements; (2) actions and projects beyond what is currently required that reflect best practices as shown through analysis of actual deployment and implementation; and (3) new programs and actions that have not been tested through analysis and implementation but appear to potentially reduce

[11] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(d).
[12] *See, e.g.,* SB 901, August 31, 2018, Senate Floor Analysis, p. 13 (this bill requires "additional requirements as part of the electric utility's annual wildfire mitigation plans...").
[13] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(b) ("Prior to approval, the commission may require modification of the plans.")
[14] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(g).
[15] SB 901, Senate Floor Analysis, p. 14, August 31, 2018.

catastrophic wildfire risk. In this WMP cycle, we urge the Commission to limit its focus to categories (1) and (2), which are actions that have already been found to be reasonable under prior rate cases and reflect best practices and/or are specifically required under state or Commission requirements. We further urge the Commission not to decide the specific numerical scope of the projects and actions, such as the exact number of poles that may be replaced. Approving specific numerical scope of actions could prejudice the ability for assessments of whether a particular project or action is necessary to occur in the field and the rate case's eventual determination of reasonableness.

To the extent utilities are requesting new programs and actions this cycle, the Commission should either limit them to narrow pilot programs, or wait until the utilities can produce the information necessary to demonstrate that the program they are requesting is reasonable. The Commission thus should not approve a particular program or action without a showing of effectiveness based on either implementation or a robust analysis. The Commission should also not create a compliance requirement for an action or project that may later be shown to not be effective in reducing wildfire risk. For all these reasons, we urge the Commission to limit its approval of actions and projects in this cycle to those already required and/or approved in prior rate cases, which reflect best practices. Ratepayers, especially low-income ratepayers, should not have to pay for programs that may not be effective in reducing wildfire risk.

D. The Commission Should Focus Its Approval and the Metrics for Assessing Compliance to Mitigating the Risk of Catastrophic Wildfires.

The plain language of SB 901 focuses on minimization of the risk of "catastrophic" wildfires, providing that: "Each electrical corporation shall construct, maintain, and operate its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that will minimize the risk of *catastrophic* wildfire posed by those electrical lines and equipment."[16] SB 901 further states that utilities' WMPs must include: "A description of the preventive strategies and programs to be adopted by the electrical corporation to minimize the risk of its electrical lines and equipment causing *catastrophic* wildfires, including consideration of dynamic climate change risks."[17] Given this language, and the limited time the Commission has to review this initial plan, we urge the Commission to focus its analysis on projects and actions that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. We further urge the Commission, consistent with the language of SB 901, to focus its metrics and eventual

[16] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(a) (emphasis added).
[17] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(c)(3) (emphasis added).

review of the plans on situational performance and harm because a utility's response is a critical factor in whether an ignition leads to catastrophe.

2. OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The overall objectives and strategies in this cycle should focus primarily on reducing the risk of catastrophic fires through customer education and outreach, and situational awareness and weather technology. A utility's response to and preparation for an ignition can make all the difference in whether an ignition is limited to a small area or it becomes a catastrophe. SDG&E appropriately identifies a three-pronged approach for mitigating the risks of wildfires: "operations and engineering, situational awareness and weather technology, and customer education and outreach."[18] CEJA agrees that outreach and situational awareness are two of the primary approaches that should be employed as the focus of this cycle.

3. RISK ANALYSIS AND RISK DRIVERS

A. The Utilities Should Prioritize Communities that Face a Higher Risk Due to Socio-Economic Factors When Determining the Order for Hardening Facilities. The Human Impact Should Not Be Ignored.

SB 901 requires the WMPs to include "[a] list that identifies, describes, and prioritizes **all** wildfire risks, and drivers for those risks."[19] The utilities' plans solely focus on biophysical risks,[20] and thus, they fail to consider one of the most significant risks from catastrophic wildfires—socioeconomic factors that make certain populations more vulnerable to the devastating impacts of wildfires. These factors, which can turn a wildfire into a catastrophe, must be considered. SB 901 requires consideration of all risks, not just biophysical risks, and the human impact of wildfires and the higher risks certain populations face should not be ignored.

The three largest utilities do not currently consider socioeconomic vulnerabilities at all when prioritizing projects on the grid. When asked whether it considers socioeconomic vulnerabilities, PG&E states that: "PG&E's Wildfire Safety Plan as currently directed, has not taken socioeconomic factors or vulnerable population information into consideration."[21] PG&E prioritized its measures on a risk-based approach, but nevertheless, PG&E states that it "is open to suggestions on how to incorporate socioeconomic factors or vulnerable population

[18] SDG&E WMP, p. 6.
[19] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(c)(10) (emphasis added).
[20] CEJA's comments are focused on PG&E, SCE and SDG&E.
[21] Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-001, Question 1; *see also* Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-001, Question 2.

information into the Plan."[22] For its part, SCE states that: "[t]he grid hardening activities and programs in SCE's 2019 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) are focused on prioritizing the highest fire-risk areas in SCE's service territory as those risks pertain to electric infrastructure. SCE's WMP is agnostic to the particular socioeconomic conditions in any individual high fire risk area…"[23] Similar to SCE, SDG&E examines "the likelihood of equipment failure and estimating fire growth at a location." This modeling by SDG&E, however, does not consider "human impacts."[24] SDG&E admits that "a few capital projects do get prioritized by the order of completion",[25] which illustrates that the utility has a system of prioritization that could take the increased risks faced by vulnerable communities into account.

CEJA agrees with the utilities that it is important to prioritize high fire-risk areas. CEJA disagrees, however, that the higher risks populations face due to environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities should not be considered at all. Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, as California has stated, significantly increase the risk of catastrophe for certain populations due to wildfires. Failing to consider these risks is inconsistent with California policy and SB 901's mandate to consider "all" risks related to wildfires.

As Senate Bill 32 (2017) recognizes, the state's most disadvantaged communities "are affected first and most frequently, by the adverse impacts of climate change, including an increased frequency of extreme weather events [, and] … disproportionately impacted by the deleterious effects of climate change on public health."[26] Certain populations, such as the state's most disadvantaged communities, are more vulnerable to the risks from wildfires because social vulnerability directly impacts a given population's "ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover" from a disaster such as a wildfire.[27] For example, certain populations already face conditions such as unhealthy air that make their vulnerability to wildfires and their impacts

[22] Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-001, Question 1.
[23] *See* Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-001, Question 1; *see also* Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-001, Question 2.
[24] Attachment 3, CEJA-SDGE-001, Question 1, *see also* Attachment 2, CEJA-SDG&E-001, Question 2.
[25] *See* Attachment 3, CEJA-SDGE-001, Question 1.
[26] SB 32 (2017).
[27] *See generally* Social Vulnerability to Climate Change in California: *A White Paper from the California Energy Commission's California Climate Change Center*, p. ii, July 2012, http://www.energy.ca.gov/2012publications/CEC-500-2012-013/CEC-500-2012-013.pdf

worse.[28] In addition, certain populations often lack the resources necessary to relocate in the event of power outages, which can leave the power off when electricity needs are crucial, especially during dangerously hot or cold days.[29] Vulnerable populations also can lack the financial resources to be able to prepare for a wildfire and rebuild in the event of one.[30] As a threat multiplier, climate disasters exacerbate and amplify existing inequities, like substandard housing and inadequate healthcare.[31] Thus, when considering plans for mitigating wildfires, disadvantaged and low-income communities have unique energy-related risks and vulnerabilities that should be considered to mitigate the potential of a catastrophe. "[A] sole focus on biophysical wildfire hazards like fuel and weather conceals the root causes that turn fire, a natural process, into a disaster."[32]

The State of California has made it a priority to "[i]dentify and prioritize populations that are low-income and otherwise disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts."[33] In fact, as Executive Order N-05-19 describes, "social vulnerability factors" should be "of equal importance" when determining wildfire risk as "dangerous fuel conditions, wind patterns, fire behavior, and other scientific indicators." This priority is based in part on a recognition that "[s]upporting communities' abilities to address climate hazards is crucial for increasing resilience."[34]

As described above, communities that are low-income, linguistically isolated, and already face other environmental risks are the most at risk from wildfires. To identify and specify these

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[28] U.S. EPA, Vulnerability Index Provides Public Health Tool to Protect Vulnerable Populations from Impaired Air, https://www.epa.gov/air-research/community-health-vulnerability-index-provides-public-health-tool-protect-vulnerable ("Breathing smoke from a nearby wildfire is a health threat, especially for people with lung or heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure as well as older adults, and those living in communities with poverty, unemployment and other indicators of social stress.")
[29] *See* Rachel Morello-Frosch, et. al., *The Climate Gap*, p. 5 (2009), https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/climategap/
[30] Davies IP, Haugo RD, Robertson JC, Levin PS (2018) The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wildfire. PLoS ONE 13(11): e0205825, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205825
[31] *See* California Department of Public Health, *Climate Change and Health Equity Issue Brief*, p. 2, https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/CCHEP-General/CDPH_CC-and-Health-Equity-Issue-Brief.pdf.
[32] Davies IP, Haugo RD, Robertson JC, Levin PS (2018) The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wildfire. PLoS ONE 13(11): e0205825, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205825.
[33] Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update, p. 38, http://resources.ca.gov/docs/climate/safeguarding/update2018/safeguarding-california-plan-2018-update.pdf.
[34] *Id*.

communities, the Commission will be evaluating the definition of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in the Climate Change Adaptation Proceeding (R.18-04-019), and CalFire will be adopting a definition of vulnerable communities as required by Executive Order N-05-19.

While these definitions are being determined, Commission precedent, CalEnviroScreen, and AB 1550 provide a concrete way to define disadvantaged and low-income communities that are the most likely to face higher risks from wildfires for this WMP cycle. Prior Commission decisions have defined disadvantaged communities as the top 25% most vulnerable communities in CalEnviroScreen, along with the census tracts that score in the top 5% of pollution burden, but do not have an overall CalEnviroScreen score.[35] "This definition has the advantage of being readily available, widely recognized, and simple to administer on a statewide basis."[36]

With regard to low-income communities, AB 1550 has identified those in "census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093."[37] This definition also is readily available and simple to administer.

By overlaying the definition of disadvantaged communities and low-income communities with areas of Tier 2 and Tier 3 wildfire risks, utilities can start to evaluate what communities within Tier 2 and Tier 3 are likely to be at increased risk due to socioeconomic factors.

To help mitigate socioeconomic disparities, WMPs can and should prioritize hardening projects that are located in and improve the resilience of those communities that face the highest risk. Specifically, CEJA requests for this cycle:

(1) WMPs should continue to prioritize hardening on tiered fire risk;

(2) Utilities should identify communities that are low-income or disadvantaged; and

(3) WMPs should prioritize these communities when hardening the system for each risk tier.

For example, if a utility identifies two communities of equal risk, if one is disadvantaged, the utility should prioritize the hardening work in the disadvantaged community.

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[35] D.18-06-027, p. 16 (observing that in addition to Commission's routine reliance on CalEnviroScreen to define disadvantaged communities, "it is clear that the concept of "disadvantaged communities" as articulated in H&S Code § 39711 and implemented by CalEPA has become the standard for use by state agencies."); D.18-02-018; *see also* D.18-05-040, pp. 94-95 (using CalEnviroScreen); D.16-05-050, p.15; D.15-01-051, pp. 53-54.

[36] *See* D.18-02-018, p. 66.

[37] AB 1550 (2016).

This prioritization, which will not cost the ratepayers additional money, is necessary to start addressing the disparate risks certain populations face due to wildfires. Prioritization is also important where some plans will take up to ten years to execute.[38] Further, it is necessary to consider "all" wildfire risks, as required by SB 901. These steps will help ensure that disadvantaged and low-income communities are not the last communities within their tiers to receive the hardening that is essential for mitigating risk of catastrophic wildfires in their communities. The incredible human risk these communities face should not be ignored.

4. WILDFIRE PREVENTION STRATEGY AND PROGRAMS

A. Operational Practices, Including Public Safety Power Shut-off (PSPS)

Although the details of de-energization will be analyzed in a different proceeding, the WMPs approved in this proceeding must include at least general markers for the components necessary to support and mitigate the impacts on customers of de-energization. In particular, community resource centers, both mobile and stationary, are critical for communities during outages, whether due to PSPS events or wildfires. Indeed, SB 901 requires WMPs to describe protocols for PSPSs that consider the impacts of a shutoff on public safety, and mitigate those impacts.[39] SB 901 also requires WMPs to include protocols for supporting customers during and after a wildfire, and specifically for supporting low-income customers."[40] Even for utilities that do not have established resource center protocols, each WMP should at a minimum include a framework through which resource centers will be developed. The details can be further specified in the de-energization proceeding as long as community resource centers are included in all the plans in this proceeding.

Resource centers are particularly important for vulnerable communities, which often do not have the resources to relocate when the power goes out. These communities are likely to be significantly impacted by the lack of water, air conditioning, refrigeration and communications. Particularly for vulnerable communities, WMPs must plan to mitigate the impacts of both wildfires and PSPS events utilities may trigger to avoid wildfires. Mitigation measures should include both fixed locations where community members can access resources, and mobile

[38] PG&E, for example, states that its hardening program will take 10 years. *See, e.g.,* PG&E WMP, p. 8.
[39] Cal. Pub. Util. Code §§ 8386(c)(6), (18).
[40] Cal. Pub. Util. Code §§8386(c)(6), (18). Subdivision 18 specifies the WMPs must include a description of compliance with Commission mandates around these topics.

resource centers that have the flexibility to enter an at-risk area and, if some community members are not able to move, provide services where they are.

SDG&E's Community Resource Centers ("CRCs") provide a good starting point for WMPs for fixed location resources, which other utilities should include in their plans. These CRCs are open during de-energization events. As SDG&E describes: "As a result of community meetings held in the most at-risk communities in SDG&E's service area, SDG&E established … CRCs [to assist] those communities in real time during extreme weather events."[41] As SDG&E further describes, "[t]hese CRCs are powered by portable generation supplied by SDG&E and provide such things as: water, snacks, cell phone charging, and up-to-date information on outages as well as provide the community affected a place to congregate."[42] This type of resource is critical for communities that lack the resources to be able to relocate during a de-energization event.

Certain elements from SDG&E's CRC process represent best practices, but other elements should be improved going forward in the de-energization proceeding and future WMP cycles. First, because the communities are the experts in what they need, the community should guide the planning for CRCs, as well as for mobile services. SDG&E describes its process to identify optimal sites for CRCs, working with the affected community to discuss locations that work for the community.[43] In addition to deciding center locations, this community engagement process should decide when the CRCs will be available. For example, the utilities will be providing significant notice prior to a PSPS. How many hours in advance of the PSPS will the community need the centers to open so community can ensure medicines or other items that require continuous refrigeration are stocked? CEJA requests that the WMPs plan to work with affected communities to define where the CRCs should be sited and when they will be available.

Second, in coordination with offices of emergency services, WMPs should entertain more expansive, or different, services at CRCs. These would include transportation to CRCs for community members in need, as contemplated by PG&E.[44] CEJA does not contemplate that CRCs would replace evacuation centers, and they are not anticipated to be open in close

[41] SDG&E WMP, p. 62.
[42] Attachment 3, SDG&E-CEJA-01, Question 3.
[43] SDG&E WMP, p. 63.
[44] "Included would be the ability to support the transportation of vulnerable residential customers to and from these centers." Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-01, Question 3, p. 1.

proximity to active wildfires. As SDG&E envisions - "[t]he intent of a CRC is for temporary support absent an emergency or nearby wildfire."[45] During Santa Ana winds and peak wildfire conditions, and when more distant fires cause outages to at-risk communities, communities often suffer poor air quality. Communities may choose that their CRCs therefore provide an indoor area with air filtration to allow a respite from high levels of particulate matter. More extensive needs might also include dispensing ice in coolers and N-95 masks, refrigeration for medically-necessary items, charging stations for phones and batteries to keep flashlights, radios and other equipment accessible, and access to communications that are not reliant on cell towers.

CEJA also supports WMPs contemplating deployment of mobile resources to areas that suffer outages either due to a PSPS or wildfire. SCE provides an example, in that it provides Community Outreach Vehicles "equipped with back-up power, water, snacks, and other sundries so that customers can charge their personal devices (mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) and continue to receive information/updates from SCE about the outage, listen for relevant public safety broadcasts, and/or connect with friends and family concerned with their well-being during Public Safety Power Shutoff events."[46] CEJA would support expanding the scope of Community Outreach Vehicles, as specified by the particular communities they would serve.

With respect to both mobile and stationary resource centers, it is vital that generation be focused on renewable and storage to the greatest extent possible. Diesel backup generators should not be operating in areas that are already overburdened by pollutants due to Santa Ana conditions, other local back-up diesel generation, and wildfires. Further, diesel supply chains may be interrupted, while solar to charge storage should be more reliable during peak fire conditions. Utilities should be instructed to investigate clean mobile generation options.

CEJA urges the Commission to require that PG&E, SCE and SDG&E develop both mobile and stationary resource centers through community-driven process. Specifically, CEJA urges the Commission to require PG&E and SCE to both specify in their WMP that they will be developing stationary CRCs consistent with SDG&E's approach, and that PG&E and SDG&E will work on developing mobile resource centers consistent with SCE's approach. Although the details of what is actually included in the CRCs may be discussed in the de-energization

[45] Attachment 3, CEJA-SDGE-01, Question 3, p. 3.
[46] Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-01, Question 3, p. 1.

proceeding, it is important that the WMPs contain a placeholder for developing CRCs through a community-driven process.

B. Inspections

PG&E, SCE, and SDG&E all propose new investments in inspections, with PG&E proposing to spend over $1 billion.[47] Problematically, however, it is not clear whether the prior inspections were so deficient as to require PG&E and SCE to spend an order of magnitude more than before. SB 901 importantly requires utilities to "[m]onitor and audit the effectiveness of electrical line and equipment inspections, including inspections performed by contractors, carried out under the plan and other applicable statutes and commission rules."[48] This is information that the utilities do not appear to currently have.

In response to a data request asking about how effective past inspections have been in identifying equipment that may fail, PG&E states it "does not have aggregated data available to calculate" this effectiveness.[49] Even though PG&E has submitted a plan requesting a significant increase in its inspections, it admits that it has not yet even investigated "information about outstanding maintenance tags from prior inspections" to "identify lessons learned."[50]

In addition to not studying past inspections for lessons learned, it is not clear why PG&E must go out for multiple inspections of the same equipment, and why it cannot combine inspections. An increase from $15 million in the last GRC to over $1 billion[51] is not justified when PG&E has not even conducted a basic analysis to determine whether its prior inspections were deficient.

In response to a similar data request asking how effective past inspections have been, SCE states that it "has not completed an analysis of how effective its inspections have been in identifying equipment prior to failure."[52] SCE, for its part, has stated that it "*expects* Enhanced Overhead Inspections to improve SCE's ability to detect potentially problematic equipment…"[53] The Commission needs more than a guess before committing ratepayer money to programs.

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[47] *See* SDG&E WMP, Section 4.2; PG&E WMP, Section 4.2, Attachment E (chart showing projected costs); SCE WMP, Section 4.2.
[48] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(b)(19)(C).
[49] Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-002_005, Question 5.
[50] Attachment 1, CEJA-PG&E-002_005, Question 5.
[51] PG&E WMP, Attachment E (detailing projected costs).
[52] Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-02, Question 5.
[53] Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-02, Question 5.

In response to the same data request, SDG&E similarly does not provide any quantitative analysis of its inspections.[54] Rather, it provides a general narrative of describing the work its inspections have done.[55] Nevertheless, SDG&E has the benefit of time and implementation as SDG&E has already been conducting the types of inspections it identifies in its WMP.

Due to this lack of analysis about effectiveness of prior inspections, we request that the Commission require SCE and PG&E to perform inspections in this cycle consistent with SDG&E's current best practices. Without an analysis of how effective past inspections have been, it is impossible to know what aspects need to be enhanced. Nevertheless, because SDG&E's current practice was subject to a previous Commission decision and is designed to meet compliance requirements, it represents the best practice, which can be used as the baseline for this WMP cycle.[56] To the extent SCE and PG&E wish to develop new inspection programs beyond what SDG&E does, they should be required to develop a pilot program and monitor and audit the effectiveness of their inspections in this program before the total program can be approved in the next WMP cycle and the subsequent general rate case.

C. System Hardening

In their plans, the utilities include significant programs for system hardening including potential pole replacement and covered conductors. Before any additional new hardening work is approved, utilities should be required to show that the particular hardening project is either currently required or reflects best practices for mitigating the potential for wildfires.

(1) Hardening Should Focus on Ensuring All Poles and Wires Meet Current Requirements.

Hardening work should prioritize meeting current Commission requirements. The Commission's Electric and Communication Facility Safety Section regularly audits programs under requirements of GO 96 and GO 165, which include maintenance requirements to mitigate the potential of ignitions. Recent data shows the utilities, especially PG&E, have had issues as recently as 2018 complying with GOs designed to ensure facilities do not cause ignitions. For example, in the July 31, 2018 inspection of Sonoma, the Commission found that PG&E had not addressed a total of 405 work orders by their assigned due date, and the field inspection found

[54] Attachment 3, CEJA-SDG&E-02, Question 5.
[55] Attachment 3, CEJA-SDG&E-02, Question 5.
[56] *See* SDG&E WMP, p. B-1.

violations of GO 95 including damaged poles.[57] Similarly, a March 2018 inspection of North Bay found that PG&E did not address a total of 1,397 work orders by their assigned due dates, and the field inspection found violations of GO 95.[58] Further, a February 2018 inspection of the Antelope Valley District found that a number of poles were damaged, exposing ground wire.[59] These are just examples from the inspections, which have limited scope as they only occur periodically for certain parts of the state. A priority of any hardening program should thus be to ensure that the utility infrastructure meets current requirements.

(2) The Effectiveness of Steel Poles Has Not Been Shown.

SDG&E proposes to install steel poles throughout its HFTD, stating they "are more resilient should a fire occur leading to faster restoration times."[60] It is unclear, however, whether steel poles will necessarily perform better in fire conditions, which are likely to reach temperatures above 500 degrees C. The study that SDG&E cites for the Commission only tested steel poles up to 360 degrees C.[61] One study found that steel poles will not support design loads if the steel reaches 500 degrees C, which is likely in a wildfire.[62] Thus, the study found that "[a]vailable data does not support a conclusion that distribution poles of galvanized steel will resist wildfires any better than those of preserved wood."[63] Before widespread deployment of steel poles through HFTDs, utilities should be required to study whether steel or treated wood poles actually performs better in fire conditions.

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[57] CPUC, July 31, 2018 Audit Findings of PG&E's Sonoma Division, http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUC_Public_Website/Content/Safety/Electric_Safety_and_Reliability/Reports_and_Audits/Electric_Facilities/EA2018_800_Sonoma.pdf

[58] CPUC, May 30, 2018 Audit Findings of PG&E's North Bay Division, http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUC_Public_Website/Content/Safety/Electric_Safety_and_Reliability/Reports_and_Audits/Electric_Facilities/EA2018_811_NorthBay.pdf

[59] CPUC, May 3, 2018 Audit Findings of Southern California Edison's Antelope Valley District, http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUC_Public_Website/Content/Safety/Electric_Safety_and_Reliability/Reports_and_Audits/Electric_Facilities/EA2018-812%20(SCE%20Antelope%20Valley)%20Audit%20Report.pdf

[60] SDG&E WMP, p. 33.

[61] *See* SDG&E Response to SED Question 4.3.7.

[62] *See* North American Wood Pole Council, Technical Bulletin, The Performance of Distribution Utility Poles in Wildland Fire Hazard Areas, https://woodpoles.org/portals/2/documents/TB_PolesInWildfires.pdf; *see also* M. Hamilton, Utility Poles & Fire: Surprising Findings on Wood vs. Steel (April 16, 2015), http://www.rollingleaf.com/blogs/utility-poles-fire-surprising-findings/.

[63] *See* North American Wood Pole Council, Technical Bulletin, The Performance of Distribution Utility Poles in Wildland Fire Hazard Areas, https://woodpoles.org/portals/2/documents/TB_PolesInWildfires.pdf.

(3) The Commission Should Only Allow Pilot Projects for Covered Conductors until Their Effectiveness Has Been Shown.

Utilities have included proposed projects for installing covered conductor projects in their WMPs. However, it is unclear whether covered conductors should be used beyond targeted applications, and if they are used, it is unclear what the best material for covered conductors will be. As SDG&E admits, "there are factors that need to be considered when installing covered conductor. If a covered conductor fails and falls to the ground, it is possible that a high impedance fault would occur."[64] High impedance faults are difficult to detect, which could lead to "downed energized wires."[65] Further, it does not appear that any of the utilities have analyzed how well current installations of covered conductors are working to mitigate fire risks.[66] Given all these real uncertainties, CEJA requests that the Commission limit the installation of covered conductors to lines being replaced in the near term until the advantages and disadvantages of covered conductors can be better understood in the next WMP cycle.

D. Vegetation Management Plan

The three investor owned utilities propose enhanced vegetation management. While enhanced inspections and situational awareness of vegetation is likely reasonable, it is not clear that cutting down significantly more trees is reasonable. SDG&E proposes to increase its tree trim scope from a 12 feet clearance to a "25 feet clearance post-trim within the HFTD where feasible between trees and electric facilities."[67] SCE proposes to expend its "vegetative management activities to being assessing the structural condition of trees that are not dead or dying…located up to 200 feet on either side of SCE's electrical facilities."[68] SCE anticipates that it will take 5 to 8 years to complete the first pass of assessments and mitigation.[69] PG&E plans a similar approach, targeting 10 species of live trees that it determines have a clear path to strike and other potential risk factors.[70]

This new enhanced vegetation management approach that would require cutting down significantly more trees has largely not been shown to be necessary or reasonable to the scope

[64] SDG&E WMP, p. 37.
[65] SDG&E WMP, p. 37.
[66] *See* Attachment 1, PG&E-MGRA-01, Question 17; Attachment 2, SCE-MGRA-01, Question 17; Attachment 3, SDG&E-MGRA-01, Question 17.
[67] SDG&E WMP, p. 43.
[68] SCE WMP, p. 58.
[69] SCE WMP, p. 58-59.
[70] PG&E WMP, pp. 79-80.

requested in the WMPs in light of the consequences of cutting down trees that may be providing support for other trees, reducing carbon, and other important ecological benefits. SDG&E raises issues such as "the ongoing and increased threat of wildfire risk throughout California" as justification for this increase.[71] This type of general justification is not sufficient to require thousands of trees to be removed in this WMP, especially when these issues should be addressed in a proceeding that can fully assess the reasonableness of the proposal. As SCE admits, it is still "finalizing these additional hazard tree removal procedures" and that its risk assessment methodology is discussed in its 2018 GSRP application.[72]

Further information and evidence is necessary before thousands of healthy trees are cut down or utilities cut trees to maintain a significantly larger clearance. Before the Commission gives utilities wide latitude to cut down thousands of trees, more Commission direction is necessary to specify how the decisions should be made and what clearances should be used. As it stands now, utilities have developed their own metrics and plans for how to analyze tree cutting operations.[73] Although these metrics can be a starting point, Commission direction and evaluation is needed. Utilities should not be deciding vegetation management for private landowners without direction from the Commission. That analysis can either occur as part of the next WMP cycle or in a proceeding specifically analyzing that issue.

Furthermore, as PG&E states, "the most significant challenge to the EVM program schedule is the limited availability of qualified work force."[74] The work force should focus on making sure that the Commission and other requirements are met before unproven expansive vegetation management programs are deployed.

In addition, more transparency is needed about utilities' vegetation management process. The Commission can and should require more transparency in this WMP as issues related to vegetation management processes are evaluated. The public needs more data and transparency about what trees are being considered hazardous by utilities. SDG&E's plan contains a tree database, which records all of the 460,000 known trees in close proximity to its electric

[71] SDG&E WMP, p. 43.
[72] SCE WMP, pp. 58-59.
[73] *See* Attachment 1, PG&E-MGRA-01, Question 15; Attachment 2, SCE-MGRA-01, Question 15; Attachment 3, SDG&E-MGRA-01, Question 15.
[74] PG&E WMP, p. 80.

infrastructure.[75] This type of database could be used to help customers see when trees in their community are being flagged as hazardous.

E. Situational Awareness

One of the most important measures that utilities can undertake to prevent catastrophic wildfires is enhancing situational awareness. SDG&E has developed an enhanced situational awareness team comprised of experts in a variety of fields so that when "abnormal and dangerous conditions occur, SDG&E is prepared to mobilize personnel and resources to abate, mitigate, and respond to these conditions."[76] This situational awareness includes a network of weather stations, camera networks, fire detection, and wireless fault indicators.[77] This type of situational awareness is critical for responding to conditions when they occur. SCE and PG&E appear to be developing their situational awareness, but they do not yet include all the elements that SDG&E has in its plan. We urge the Commission to require SCE and PG&E to develop SDG&E's basic framework of weather stations, camera networks, fire detection and wireless fault indicators as a best practice.

F. Technologies to Improve Resilience

One technology that needs to be examined in future WMP cycles are ways that batteries and microgrids can increase resilience of communities in the event of wildfires and power outages. SB 901 requires utilities to describe the steps they will take to ensure the "highest levels of safety, reliability and resiliency" by taking steps to harden and modernize the system.[78] To ensure the resiliency of all parts of its service territories, utilities must take into account the particular vulnerabilities and risks that disadvantaged and low-income communities face especially when these communities are in wildfire prone areas.

When considering ways to increase resilience, utilities should prioritize disadvantaged communities for pilot projects that utilities, such as PG&E, are developing to increase the resilience of communities that face wildfire risks. In particular, PG&E states that "[r]esilience zones are one of several strategies that PG&E is developing to alleviate the risks and impacts of proactive de-energization on our communities. Resilience Zones are designed to reduce outage impacts by enabling central community resources, where technically feasible, such as: food, fuel,

[75] SDG&E WMP, p. 41.
[76] SDG&E WMP, p. 47.
[77] SDG&E WMP, pp. 49-50.
[78] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(c)(12).

hygiene, shelter, medical, and critical infrastructure to remain energized while the broader area is shut off to reduce ignition risk."[79] SDG&E states that it is developing a "more in-depth plan to meet with and develop resiliency plans with the same communities that SDG&E met with and developed the CRC concept from."[80] This planning effort includes meeting with various groups, including community groups, to reach more communities.

CEJA supports PG&E's and the other utilities' pilot project work to start identifying ways to create resilient communities through microgrids and other technologies. Microgrids are an example of the type of pilot project that can be considered because they can increase energy-resilience of critical facilities in a low-income area that faces increased fire risks.[81] As the CEC states, "[m]icrogrids can be designed to maintain critical loads safely, even if the surrounding area is without electricity."[82] This type of infrastructure is important to start examining in this cycle as pilot projects, like PG&E, and more concretely in the following cycles as a way to protect vulnerable communities in the event of a fire.[83] In addition, the WMPs should prioritize disadvantaged and low-income communities when designing resiliency pilot projects.

G. Post-incident Recovery, Restoration, and Remediation

SB 901 requires: "Protocols for compliance with requirements adopted by the commission regarding activities to support customers during and after a wildfire, outage reporting, support for low-income customers, billing adjustments, deposit waivers, extended payment plans, suspension of disconnection and nonpayment fees, repair processing and timing, access to utility representatives, and emergency communications."[84] These requirements include the interim disaster relief emergency customer protections in Commission Resolutions M-4833 and M-4835, and the Commission affirmed that these resolutions set forth the minimum requirements for utilities in D.18-08-004. Thus, the WMPs must at a minimum develop protocols that ensure compliance with the requirements of Resolutions M-4833 and M-4835.

[79] Attachment 1, PG&E-CEJA-01, Response 7.
[80] Attachment 3, SDG&E-CEJA-01, Response 4.
[81] *See* California Energy Commission, *Tracking Progress Report - Energy Equity Indicators*, pp. 32-33, March 2, 2018, Docket No. 18-IEPR-08.
[82] *See* California Energy Commission, *Tracking Progress Report - Energy Equity Indicators*, pp. 32-33, March 2, 2018 (describing how microgrid provided resilience for critical facilities during the Blue Fire.).
[83] Microgrids may also be a way to mitigate concerns related to deenergizing lines. *See, e.g.,* Taryn Luna, L.A. Times, *California Fire: PG&E Canceled Planned Power Shut-off in Paradise Area Just Before Camp Fire Broke Out* (Nov. 17, 2018).
[84] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(c)(18).

(1) SDG&E's WMP Should Be Modified to Include Billing Adjustments for Time Periods When Residents Are Evacuated.

The Commission's Resolutions M-4833 and M-4835 include important tools to protect customers impacted by wildfires, including a requirement that utilities stop estimated energy usage for billing residential customers for the time when the home was not occupied as a result of wildfires.[85] SCE includes provisions to meet this requirement stating that it "suspends bill estimation for customers impacted by disasters, including those customers who were taken away from their residences or businesses when evacuations were ordered."[86] PG&E includes similar provisions.[87] SDG&E, however, does not appear to meet this requirement. It only adjusts bills "[w]here the residential structure has been destroyed."[88] CEJA requests that SDG&E include explicit provisions in its plan to adjust billing when a home or business is unoccupied due to a disaster.

(2) *SDG&E and PG&E Should Include Specific Ways to Deploy ESA to Low-Income Communities Impacted by a Wildfire.*

As acknowledged by the Commission, another potential useful mechanism to help low-income community members impacted by a wildfire is the Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program. As such, the Commission requires utilities to "[i]ndicate how the Energy Savings Assistance program can be *deployed* to assist impacted customers."[89] Deployment is different than changing requirements for eligibility, because changing requirements for eligibility, by itself, will not necessarily result in increased deployment unless specific actions are taken to make sure program outreach includes an impacted community. Deployment also requires actual work within a community to ensure that meaningful opportunities are developed for residential customers impacted by a wildfire. To meet this requirement, SCE states that it "educates low-income customers impacted by a disaster about the ESA program and, if customers are interested, deploys its ESA contractors to customers' homes to confirm ESA program qualification and assists in the enrollment process."[90]

[85] Resolution M-4835, p. 5.
[86] SCE WMP, p. 84.
[87] PG&E WMP, p. 127.
[88] SDG&E WMP, p. 70.
[89] Resolution M-4833.
[90] SCE WMP, p. 84.

SDG&E, however, fails to describe plans to "deploy" ESA programs because it only plans to modify the ESA program by allowing customers to self-certify.[91] PG&E similarly only includes plans to modify the certifications requirements for ESA rather than include specific measures to actually deploy ESA such as increased outreach. Increasing education and outreach, like SCE plans, is one way to help assist the deployment of ESA to impacted customers. SDG&E states that it will work with local Community Based Organizations "to place an emphasis on the additional measures available to customers."[92] CEJA requests that at a minimum SDG&E and PG&E work with Community Based Organizations to increase the deployment of ESA programs to those impacted by wildfires.

(3) Low-Income Programs Should Apply to All Low-Income Customers in an Impacted County.

PG&E's WMP proposes that its protocols for allowing customers to self-certify for the ESA program for low-income customers and freezing standard and high-usage reviews for the California Alternate Rate for Energy (CARE) program should be applied for *all* low-income customers in impacted counties.[93] CEJA supports PG&E's request, and urges the Commission to have SCE and SDG&E similarly apply their low-income protocols for CARE and ESA to all customers in impacted counties.

(4) *Suspension of Disconnection and Extended Payment Plans Should Be Available to Customers Whose Employment Was Impacted by Wildfires.*

With respect to suspension of disconnection and extended payment plans, CEJA has several recommendations. First, customers should be allowed to "self-certify their particular, disaster-related financial situation" as SCE proposes.[94] Self-certification is important when customers have lost their financial documentation. SCE's proposal is a practical solution that would allow customers to not be penalized for not having records.

CEJA further requests that the Commission require development of protocols to assist customers whose employment was impacted by a wildfire. Specifically, CEJA requests that the options of payment plans and suspension of disconnection be applied to those whose place of employment was destroyed or damaged during a wildfire. Utilities currently define impacted customers narrowly. For example, SDG&E defines directly impacted customers that may be

[91] SDG&E WMP, p. 69.
[92] SDG&E WMP, p. 69.
[93] PG&E WMP, p. 126.
[94] SCE WMP, p. 84.

eligible for payment plans as "those without electric service or those needing to re-locate (either temporarily or permanently) due to fire damage."[95] SCE defines impacted customers as related to payment plans as "customers whose homes or small businesses were destroyed or damaged during the disaster."[96]

Suspension of disconnection and nonpayment fees, and extended payment plans should also be available for customers, especially low-income customers, whose livelihood is impacted by the fires. For example, outdoor workers may not be able to work outside during wildfires, and after a wildfire, their places of work may be destroyed. Finding new employment in a destroyed community can be difficult, if not impossible. Even if someone has a house to go home to, they may no longer have a job. Allowing additional time to pay bills and suspending disconnections is thus important. As the Commission has stated: "payment plans are an important tool to leverage for the victims of wildfires…".[97]

Extension of suspending disconnection and payment plans to those whose livelihoods is impacted by wildfires is consistent with the Commission's direction to the utilities to consider fairness and equity:

> To be sure, we support and encourage the utilities that are willing to do more. In other words, the utilities are not barred from implementing their own disaster assistance programs to augment these interim rules. That includes giving the utilities the discretion to apply or implement additional relief efforts that are unique to its customer experience, or to the specific type of damage resulting from a disaster, or to apply applicable customer protections for customers indirectly affected by the disaster when fairness and equity require auxiliary efforts to supplemental the rules set forth here.[98]

Protecting those customers indirectly affected by the disaster is consistent with Commission direction, fairness and equity. CEJA urges the utilities to include this protection in their WMPs.

5. Emergency Preparedness, Outreach, and Response

Public awareness, achieved through accessible transparent information, is essential for ensuring that all communities, including those facing language and other barriers, are aware of potential wildfire or de-energization events that could impact them. Public outreach and awareness are also necessary to mitigate wildfire risks in the event of an ignition. As SDG&E recognizes, "customers, elected officials, non-profit support organizations, and first responders

[95] SDG&E WMP, p. 68.
[96] SCE WMP, p. 84.
[97] Resolution M-4833, p. 6.
[98] D.18-08-004, p. 4.

all play a vital role in achieving wildfire prevention and mitigation."[99] In particular, outreach before and during a wildfire are critical, especially in areas that have vulnerable populations and are subject to a high wildfire risk because outreach during a wildfire can provide the critical notification necessary for a customer to evacuate.[100] Outreach before a potential disaster can build trust, which can help ensure strong communication in the event of a wildfire.[101] Outreach can also help communities understand the resources available in the event of an emergency. Increasing public awareness of the resources available is an important step for ensuring that communities can be better protected in the event of a wildfire.

SB 901 requires utilities to include "[p]lans for community outreach and public awareness *before, during*, and after a *wildfire*, including notification in English, Spanish, and the top three primary languages used in the state other than Spanish, as determined by the commission based on the United States Census data."[102] SB 901 also separately requires "protocols related to mitigating public safety impacts of" de-energization events.[103] Despite these clear requirements, some utility outreach plans focus primarily on de-energization, not on wildfire planning, and other utilities fail to include ways to contact customers during a wildfire, when contact and outreach is likely the most critical. Problematically, the utilities also do not have a clear understanding of how many customers do not speak languages in which the utilities plan to translate their outreach material.[104] The Commission currently requires that utilities take "steps to warn customers whenever it shuts off power," and that utilities provide notice to their customers about potential shut-offs whenever feasible and appropriate.[105] The Commission should similarly require utilities to take all feasible and appropriate steps to warn customers whenever it is aware of a wildfire that implicates its equipment. This requirement would be consistent with Commission precedent requiring notice for potential de-energization events and

[99] SDG&E WMP, p. 8.
[100] *See* K. Huber, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, Resilience Strategies for Wildfire, pp. 6-7 (Nov. 2018), https://www.c2es.org/site/assets/uploads/2018/11/resilience-strategies-for-wildfire.pdf (citing benefits of increased outreach).
[101] *See* K. Huber, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, Resilience Strategies for Wildfire, pp. 6-7 (Nov. 2018), https://www.c2es.org/site/assets/uploads/2018/11/resilience-strategies-for-wildfire.pdf (citing examples).
[102] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(b)(16)(B).
[103] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386(b)(6).
[104] *See* Attachment 1, PG&E-CEJA-02, Question 1; Attachment 2, SCE-CEJA-02, Question 1; Attachment 3, SDG&E-CEJA-02, Question 1.
[105] *See* Resolution ESRB-8; D.12-04-024.

the plain language of SB 901 requiring outreach "during" a "wildfire." As such, the WMPs should be modified as follows:

SDG&E's Plan: SDG&E's outreach and public awareness plan largely appears to meet many SB 901 requirements by including a multi-level approach to community education and outreach focused on wildfire threats and emergency preparedness.[106] In particular, SDG&E includes community events and workshops, mailings, and an educational and general awareness campaign.[107]

Importantly, SDG&E's outreach plan includes an early warning system advising its customers of severe weather and dangerously high winds.[108] This early warning system is the type of system that is critical for helping communities prepare for a potential wildfire event. Although we believe that SDG&E's early warning system represents a best practice, there are still places it can be improved. For example, although SDG&E states that it contacts "directly and indirectly" its Medical Baseline customers as alert conditions are elevated,[109] it is unclear whether it uses direct and indirect methods to contact other customers during elevated alert conditions. Although Medical Baseline customers should be a priority, other customers may also have medical or specific issues that could be exacerbated by either wildfire smoke or a de-energization event. SDG&E could work with community-based organizations to help ensure that hard-to-reach populations are also reached during enhanced and elevated alert conditions. In particular, SDG&E has already stated that it plans to contact "community-based organizations it partners with who serve non-English speaking residents. SDG&E will provide these organizations with its translated fire/emergency preparedness collateral, including information about its PSPS program and CRCs."[110] These contacts could also include collaboration on how to best reach non-English speaking residents during elevated and extreme fire-threat conditions.

One of the most crucial aspects of SDG&E's WMP is its plan to notify customers during wildfires.[111] These types of notifications can be the difference between a person being able to flee a wildfire, and being trapped by fire. They are critical. SDG&E admits, however, that right

[106] SDG&E WMP, p. 62.
[107] SDG&E WMP, p. 64.
[108] SDG&E WMP, p. 64.
[109] SDG&E WMP, p. 64.
[110] Attachment 3, SDG&E-CEJA-01, Response 4.
[111] SDG&E WMP, p. 62.

now these notifications are limited to English.[112] SDG&E further admits it "does not have records related to the exact languages that its customers prefer."[113] SB 901, however, requires that outreach occur "during" a fire in five languages. While we understand how difficult it is to translate information during a wildfire, linguistically isolated people are precisely those who are more likely to need the information during a wildfire event. We request that SDG&E continue to work on its notifications to at least include Spanish as soon as possible, and that SDG&E continue to work on including the other three languages in future WMPs.

SCE's Plan: Unlike SDG&E, SCE's plan fails to describe in detail the outreach it will conduct before a wildfire. Although SCE later states that its outreach before a potential wildfire includes "overall wildfire awareness and preparation,"[114] this aspect of its plan is not described in detail. Rather, SCE's general outreach and community workshops descriptions are focused on PSPS de-energization events.[115] SCE's descriptions of outreach related to wildfire planning appears limited to outreach during and after a wildfire.[116] For example, SCE states that it will reach out to "partnering community-based organizations that serve income-eligible customers to enable awareness" of protections during and after a wildfire, but not before.[117] Outreach related to wildfire planning should not occur solely when there is an emergency—this type of outreach to communities and community-based organizations should occur before there is an emergency. CEJA requests that SCE add language to its plan to specify that its outreach before a wildfire will include discussions of wildfire threats and emergency preparedness.

With respect to SCE's outreach during a wildfire, it does not appear that SCE has a notification system to alert its customers of a wildfire to the extent feasible. When asked about a notification system for wildfires, SCE states it has worked on developing a notification system for de-energization, but it does not mention one for notifying customers during a wildfire.[118] This type of notification, which SDG&E has, should be required whenever feasible to help mitigate potential wildfire disasters. CEJA requests that SCE be required to develop a system for notifying customers during a wildfire to the extent feasible as well as in advance of potential

[112] SDG&E WMP, p. 62.
[113] Attachment 3, CEJA-SDG&E-02, Question 1.
[114] SCE WMP. P. 70.
[115] SCE WMP, p. 69.
[116] *See, e.g.,* SCE WMP, p. 80.
[117] SCE WMP, p. 80.
[118] Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-001, Question 5; *see also* Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-002, Question 3.

elevated fire conditions. We further request that SCE work with community based organizations to develop its outreach plans for times of elevated fire threats to ensure that as many of its customers are reached as possible. This work could be conducted in parallel with the outreach to community-based organizations SCE plans to do related to de-energization events.[119]

PG&E's Plan: Similar to SCE, PG&E's Plan is largely focused on outreach related to de-energization, not related to the potential risk of wildfires. For example, in its summary of customer and community outreach, PG&E states it is "[i]n place; PSPS customer outreach is ongoing and will continue before the upcoming wildfire season."[120] PG&E's public outreach before potential wildfires does not include community meetings and specific materials describing wildfire risk and emergency preparation,[121] in contrast to SDG&E's approach. Rather, PG&E's public outreach to communities before potential wildfires is largely limited to indirect efforts such as the website or other general outreach that it uses for all of its programs.[122] To remedy this, CEJA requests that the Commission require PG&E to modify its current plan to require that its de-energization outreach also include information about wildfire risks and emergency preparation.

During wildfires, PG&E does not appear to include a plan to directly notify customers of a wildfire threat.[123] PG&E's advanced notification system is focused on de-energization events and does not include notifications for potential wildfires like SDG&E's system does.[124] This type of direct contact is critical especially when a wildfire is related to utility equipment because the utility may have the first knowledge of the dangerous conditions. A warning can make all the difference in saving lives. CEJA requests that PG&E be required to develop a system for notifying customers during a wildfire similar to SDG&E's. We further request that PG&E work with community-based organizations to develop its outreach plans for times immediately before and during a wildfire to ensure that as many of its customers are reached as possible.

6. Performance Metrics and Monitoring

In addition to the evaluation conducted by an independent evaluator and the Commission's assessment, SB 901 requires utilities to "monitor and audit the implementation of

[119] Attachment 2, CEJA-SCE-001, Question 4.
[120] PG&E WMP, p. 16.
[121] PG&E WMP. p. 121.
[122] PG&E WMP, p. 121.
[123] PG&E WMP, p. 122.
[124] *See* PG&E WMP, pp. 105-106; SDG&E WMP. p. 62.

the plan," identify and correct deficiencies, and monitor and audit the effectiveness of electrical line and equipment inspections.[125] To assess compliance and penalties, SB 901 requires an analysis of factors including whether the "noncompliance resulted in harm," whether the utility self-reported the "circumstances," whether the utility implemented corrective actions, and whether the utility "had previously engaged in conduct of a similar nature that caused significant property damage or injury."[126]

The SB 901 language provides guideposts for the types of metrics that should be monitored by utilities to ensure that deficiencies can be corrected and the Commission can assess compliance with the plan pursuant to SB 901. The three guideposts that the statute requires are metrics to assess harm; metrics to assess utility response to issues; and metrics to assess effectiveness of actions and measures in identifying issues and mitigating risk.

A. Metrics to Assess Harm

As described above, the Commission must assess present and past harm caused by non-compliance with the plan to determine penalties.[127] To assess harm, we suggest the following metrics to the extent they are associated with utility equipment:

- Total acres burned by wildfires;
- Property damage caused by wildfires; and
- Total injuries and fatalities caused by wildfires.

The ultimate goal of WMPs should be preventing these types of damages. Tracking these metrics is an important measure of harm and whether the WMP is working as intended.

B. Metrics to Assess Utility Response to Issues

SB 901 requires utilities to respond to issues and deficiencies when they occur. To measure response time, it is important that metrics look at utility responses to certain issues. For example, while it is highly unlikely that ignition events will be eliminated, the utilities can take meaningful steps to ensure that ignitions do not lead to catastrophic wildfires. Metrics should be developed to determine how a utility is reacting to ignitions. Some potential metrics are:

- How fast is a line de-energized after an ignition?
- How fast is a community notified after an ignition?

[125] Cal. Public Util. § 8386(c)(19).
[126] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386.1.
[127] Cal. Public Util. Code § 8386.1.

- How fast are CalFire and other relevant fire agencies notified after an ignition?
- How long does it take until the nearest crews are dispatched to the area?

These types of metrics are consistent with SB 901's focus on utility responses and the type of metrics that have been proposed in the RAMP proceeding.[128]

C. Metrics to Assess Effectiveness of Mitigation Measures and Outreach

SB 901 explicitly requires that utilities monitor and audit the effectiveness of their inspections. Monitoring of effectiveness is critical to ensure that the WMPs can be adapted from cycle to cycle to provide the most effective mitigation at the least cost to ratepayers. As such, CEJA suggests that the following metrics be developed to assess the effectiveness of mitigation and outreach:

- What percentage of Tier 2 and Tier 3 customers have been contacted through outreach about potential wildfire and de-energization risks?
- How effective are inspections in identifying equipment that is prone to failure?
- How effective are vegetation management measures in preventing fire risk?
- How effective are other hardening measures at reducing potential ignitions?

These types of metrics are important for the utilities to continue to assess the effectiveness of their mitigation and to change their actions and projects if data shows that they are not as effective at reducing risk of catastrophic wildfires.

7. Recommendations for Future WMPs

As described above, CEJA requests that future WMPs consider: how best to consider communities that are more vulnerable to the impacts of wildfire; how to more effectively conduct outreach; how to reach customers in the event of a fire,;and how to deploy resources such as Community Resource Centers in the event of de-energization. We further request that future cycles also focus on how to increase resilience of communities and explore how to effectively harden the system to protect against catastrophic wildfires. We request that this work

[128] *See* CPUC, Risk and Safety Aspects of Risk Assessment and Mitigation Phase Report of PG&E, Investigation 17-11-003 (March 30, 2018), http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUCWebsite/Content/Safety/Risk_Assessment/RCR/SED_RAMP_Evaluation_PGE_033018a.pdf

is conducted before the next set of plans are submitted to allow time for evaluation, assessment, and participation by interested parties.

CONCLUSION

CEJA urges the Commission to narrowly interpret SB 901 in this cycle and only approve projects and actions necessary to either meet best practices or current requirements. CEJA further urges the Commission to require utilities to include the increased risk vulnerable communities face when prioritizing hardening and to increase outreach to include times before, during, and after a wildfire. With these recommendations and the recommendations described above, we believe that approval of the WMPs will set the state in the right direction to mitigate the potential of catastrophic wildfires.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: /s/ Shana Lazerow

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