From: LizAnne Jensen
To: Wildfire Safety Division
Subject: The Wildfire Safety Division Public Comment
Date: Sunday, August 9, 2020 5:26:46 PM

Hello.

This is the first time I've tried to make a public comment, so I am probably not doing it correctly. Still, I'd like to try.

Installing robust backup power for the communications grid is critical to our safety. Cellular service does not reach all of my community, Bonny Doon, which is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains near the City of Santa Cruz. Most of the area is categorized at Tier 2 and 3 on Wildfire Severity Maps.

Those of us who are still lucky enough to have AT&T landlines rely on them for life-saving public safety announcements, evacuation orders, other emergency information, and to make outgoing calls for help. However, service is widely disabled when electricity transmission fails, such as during Public Safety Power Stoppages accompanying extreme fire risk. This lack of communication puts many lives at risk.

Comcast and other communications service providers are only required to maintain 3 hours of battery backup. Power outages in our area can last several days. If a wildfire should start, there will be no way to provide alerts and instructions to over 3000 residents who may need guidance on whether to evacuate, shelter-in-place, etc. again, putting lives at risk.

Maintaining communications to our first responders is also critical so they can deploy quickly and efficiently where essential help is needed. During an emergency, we rely heavily on volunteer first responders who are distributed widely throughout the community. Our firefighters, police, medical workers, and essential government employees, as well as vulnerable at-risk residents, reside throughout our rural community, which occupies about the same square mileage as San Francisco. I recommend that communications service providers be required to have a fleet of trucks with long-term battery backups that can be deployed to areas experiencing outages and maintain power for 72 hours. They should be responsible for powering their communication systems during these outages. When the outage ends, they can return to their bases or be deployed elsewhere.

We are paying for monopoly services that are highly profitable at our expense. They should be required to provide these essential services when they are needed most!

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