



California Public Utilities Commission
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

Docket #: R.18-10-007

CPUC REQUIRES UTILITIES TO CONDUCT MORE ROBUST PUBLIC OUTREACH TO NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COMMUNITIES BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER WILDFIRES

SAN FRANCISCO, March 12, 2020 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today ordered electric utilities to conduct in-language outreach before, during, and after a wildfire to communities with limited English proficiency. The decision requires the utilities to go beyond what is required in statute to ensure communities are properly informed and empowered with critical information during wildfire events.

Today’s decision establishes a 1,000-speaker threshold with which utilities must plan to do outreach to communities in-language. Utilities are directed to use a variety of mediums including radio, television, print, door-to-door outreach, and other channels to communicate with communities in their preferred language. The decision also directs the utilities to work closely with local community-based organizations in identifying communities and conducting outreach.

Requirements from this decision, while specific to communication before, during, and after a wildfire, may be adopted across the CPUC’s other related proceedings, including proceedings related to Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS) and disaster preparedness.

“It is important for utilities to analyze and deeply understand what languages are spoken across their service territories, and be prepared to outreach to these communities in-language in the case of an emergency,” said CPUC President Marybel Batjer. “These communities may be some of the most vulnerable in the event of a wildfire, and it is critical that utilities are fully equipped with information and relationships necessary to ensure all communities are well-informed and kept safe.”



“Up until now, some of our neighbors who were most at risk from wildfires were least able to get timely and accurate information about them,” said Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves. “An important element of this decision is more explicit direction for utilities to ensure that they are communicating with all of their customers, especially those with limited English. In particular, we heard the voices of the Mixteco and Zapoteco community representatives that came to our Oxnard and Bakersfield meetings to urge us to include their communities in all of our work. This decision ensures that utilities outreach to them in their indigenous Mexican languages.”

The proposal voted on is available at

<http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M328/K864/328864883.PDF>.

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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