

ORIGINAL

Decision 93680 NOV 3 1981

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Edward Stringer, Jr. and
Thelma L. Stringer,

Complainants,

vs.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company,

Defendant.

(ECP)
Case 11006
(Filed July 17, 1981)

Edward Stringer, Jr., for Thelma L. Stringer and
himself, complainants.
Johnny T. Crews, for Pacific Gas and Electric
Company, defendant.

O P I N I O N

This is a complaint by Edward Stringer, Jr. and Thelma L. Stringer (Stringers) against Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). The complaint alleges that the Stringers' bills for the past two years have been excessive. The Stringers contend that these bills should not exceed \$60 per month and seek an adjustment from the amounts billed to that sum. PG&E contends that the bills involved reflect the energy used by the Stringers, which passed through meters found to be accurate, and billed at rates authorized by the Commission.

Mr. Stringer testified that he compared his PG&E bills with those of neighbors and co-workers living in comparable houses. His were much higher. Mr. Stringer stated that the only gas appliances in the house are the furnace and water heater. He indicated that during the first part of the period in dispute both he and his wife were employed and the two of his children who were at home (ages 18 and 19) were in school. During the later part of the period his

wife, who is receiving chemotherapy, was at home. Mr. Stringer contends that even though his wife was at home she cannot stand heat and did not use the furnace. He acknowledged that for a portion of the period a married daughter, who was separated from her husband, lived at the residence. Also, two grandchildren (ages 13 and 15) have lived with him for a portion of the period.

Mr. Stringer also testified that he thought some of his bills were based on estimates because during a portion of the period in dispute he kept a daughter's pit bulldog in his yard and could not understand how the meter could have been read. Mr. Stringer also contends that the lifeline allowances for gas and electric are too low and should be increased.

PG&E presented evidence which indicated the following: At Stringer's request, the electric meter was tested on April 26, 1978 and was found to be operating within the limits prescribed for accuracy. The electric meter was again tested on November 19, 1980 and was again found to be accurate. The gas meter was removed on November 19, 1980 and a new one installed. The removed meter was tested on November 20, 1980 and found to be accurate.

PG&E introduced evidence to show that the Stringers have a 100,000 Btu forced air furnace, which in operation uses one therm per hour. The Stringers have a 38,000 Btu water heater. On November 19, 1980, PG&E found the water heater to be on the high setting and changed it to medium at the request of the Stringers.

PG&E introduced evidence which shows that the gas and electric use during the period in dispute was similar to past usage. PG&E also introduced copies of their meter reading records which indicate that the billings were based on actual readings and not estimates.

Lifeline quantities and rates are periodically reviewed by the Commission in rate cases and investigation for that purpose. It is not appropriate to consider changing them in individual complaint cases.

The Commission takes official notice that during the period in question it granted PG&E rate increases on the following dates: Gas rate increases: December 19, 1979, April 29, 1980, February 4, 7, 1981, and June 16, 1981. Electric rate increases: October 10, 1979, December 19, 1979, February 2, 1980, April 29, 1980, February 4, 1981, and June 16, 1981. In addition a three-tier electric rate structure was authorized on April 29, 1980.

The record shows that the electric and gas meters were tested and found to be functioning properly. The bills are consistent with past usage. As complainants, the Stringers had the burden of establishing that they are entitled to relief in this proceeding. They have not met this burden. The complaint should be denied.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that complainants are entitled to no relief in this proceeding and the complaint is denied.

This order becomes effective 30 days from today.

Dated NOV 3 1981, at San Francisco, California.

JOHN E. BRYSON
President
RICHARD D. GRAVELLE
LEONARD M. GRIMES, JR.
VICTOR CALVO
PRISCILLA C. GREW
Commissioners

I certify that this decision was approved by the above Commissioners today.

John E. Bryson