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Decision 96-02-006 February 7, 1996

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Shari A. Mann,

Complainant,

vs.

Pacific Gas and Electric
Company,

Defendant.

ORIGINAL
(ECP)

Case 95-11-017
(Filed November 14, 1995)

Shari A. Mann, for complainant.
Al McLeod, for Pacific Gas and
Electric Company, defendant.

O P I N I O N

Complainant Shari A. Mann's meter in her back yard is inaccessible to defendant Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) meter reader. Therefore, after reading her meter, complainant sets the dials on a plastic card configured like a meter to provide meter readings for her bills. Complainant has used this system for 12 years. She alleges that in April 1995, defendant erroneously billed her \$1,417.24 for usage from May 24, 1994 to February 28, 1995. PG&E alleges this is the amount which was disclosed as consumed but unbilled during defendant's semi-annual verification of complainant's account.

An expedited hearing was held on December 13, 1995 in San Francisco. Based upon the evidence presented at this hearing, we herein deny the complaint.

The Hearing

Complainant agreed to make installment payments of \$200 per month on a bill retroactively charging for usage for the

period May 24, 1994 to February 28, 1995. However, she disputes the accuracy of this bill. Based on her cancelled checks for 1993 and 1994, she contends that the charge for usage in the disputed bill, roughly \$200 per month, is twice her average bill.

Complainant presented a letter from defendant's representative, Wayne E. Price, indicating that the discrepancy between billed and actual usage could have resulted in reading input errors, reading errors by the customer or meter reader, the availability of the readings or a computer error in the calculations.

Complainant denies making any errors in transferring the meter reading to the plastic card. Defendant denies any error in recording usage or billing previously unbilled usage. Complainant's electric and gas meters tested within an acceptable range of accuracy on June 5 and 19, 1995, respectively.

Defendant's meter reader uses a hand-held computer to record meter readings from the plastic card. Twice a year, the meter is actually read to compare billings with actual usage. The meter records usage separately from the meter reader's input for billing. Defendant billed additional usage based upon the recorded meter usage less prior billed usage. Thus, even if there were errors by complainant and defendant, the meter continued to record actual usage. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the April 1995 bill is inaccurate.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED that the complaint is denied and this proceeding is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated February 7, 1996, at San Francisco, California.

DANIEL Wm. FESSLER
President
P. GREGORY CONLON
JESSIE J. KNIGHT, JR.
HENRY M. DUQUE
JOSIAH L. NEEPER
Commissioners