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CPUC Should Focus on the Importance of Safety

By Wade Harper
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As mayor of the city of Antioch and a 24-year law enforcement veteran, public safety is my No. 1 concern. While we applaud the work of our local police and fire department partners, we also recognize that public safety matters include partnerships outside of government administration.

Our city is also home to **PG&E's Gateway Generating Station**, which has been safely operating since it came online in 2009. Unfortunately, a year later, the Bay Area was rocked by the 2010 San Bruno pipeline explosion, a pipeline owned by PG&E. To this day, I'm saddened by the loss of life and devastation the disaster created to the San Bruno community.

I'm working hard to ensure this does not happen in Antioch. But, I can't do it alone. Our city must continue to work in partnership with PG&E to establish the resources and support needed for preventive measures. Following the devastating explosion, I have been pleased with PG&E's corrective actions. They have invested more than \$2.2 billion in safety and pipeline infrastructure upgrades, made critical leadership changes, paid more than \$70 million in restitution costs to victims, and enhanced cooperation with local first responders to prevent and better manage any emergency.

PG&E is currently working with the Alameda and Contra Costa counties' Chief's Association, Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters and the Antioch Police Department to maintain and develop new strategies concerning preparedness.

Recently, I learned about the proposed penalty and fine that has been recommended by staff of the California Public Utilities Commission. Its recommendations threaten our city's ability to access the essential support for frequent maintenance upgrades through our partnership with PG&E.

According to the San Jose Mercury News, staff has recommended a fine of at least \$300 million, a portion of the total \$2.5 billion penalty, which will be directed to the state's general fund instead of the safety and infrastructure upgrades critically needed for East County. As a Bay Area mayor, I need PG&E to have the necessary capital to enhance overall pipeline and infrastructure safety. Let's not turn back the clock on safety.

I strongly urge CPUC to focus on the importance of safety and infrastructure upgrades. Please target funds resulting from penalties to making infrastructure as safe as possible for our residents, businesses and public agencies.

Wade Harper is mayor of the city of Antioch.

http://www.contracostatimes.com/east-county-times/cj_24365218/guest-commentary-wade-harper-cpuc-should-focus-importance

