

Comments on Wildfire Safety Advisory Board Recommendations

From: Jack Eidt <jack.eidt@wilderutopia.com>
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2020 4:37 PM
To: Wildfire Safety Advisory Board
Subject: WSAB

To Wildfire Safety Advisory Board:

I am an urban planner and environmental analyst, as well as a co-founder of a climate advocacy organization, [SoCal 350](#), based in Los Angeles. I also publish an environmental culture blog, [WilderUtopia.com](#), and produce a weekly podcast called [EcoJustice Radio](#). We have massive concerns with the increase in deadly wildfires all across the State of California and beyond as a direct result of fossil-fuel-greenhouse-gas climate disruption, and assert that action needs to be taken immediately to prevent the loss of lives and property, and to protect ecosystems from our reckless record of environmental mismanagement. Thus, we are excited for the opportunity to comment on these issues, because as we understand, with the dry start of the wet season, we are coming into the dry season already in danger, and in future years we can only surmise these issues will become more imperative.

Thank you for your analysis of the issues on Wildfire Safety. There are quite a number of very good comments overall and we appreciate that, but unfortunately important priority issues have not been addressed. We know from all reports and news articles that PG&E's history of denying the problem rather than investing in solutions has resulted in frayed, unsafe wires as a major source of utility associated wildfire in California. And taking out the forests en masse will not stop antiquated bare wires from sparking and breaking in high winds, causing grass fires that quickly turn into forest fires. Yet, PG&E is spending \$680 million on cutting trees and only spending \$240 million on replacing distribution conductor.

We assert that the number one thing as yet to be advocated properly, is to replace unsafe wire. SCE is replacing 750 miles a year with triple insulated hard steel center wire that can withstand broken branches, as well as animals and balloons and other dangers. In contrast, PG&E is only replacing 200 miles this year with single insulated steel center wires. This is the place to focus on if there is a serious intention to solve this problem instead of allowing PG&E to decide how little they can get away with doing. PG&E stated that it would be 10 years before they can stop Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS), but at this slow rate of replacement, it will be more like 20, if not more. It's time to stop allowing the utilities to set their own inadequate standards that got us into this situation.

There are at least **2,700 miles of unsafe wire in high risk Tier 2 and 3 areas** of PG&E territory. **They should replace this within three years (not 20)** if there is sincere intention to reduce PSPS events, reduce utility caused wildfire and to save lives. In addition, the inflated costs that PG&E quotes per mile should be challenged.

Ultimately, the CPUC needs to update the inadequate General Orders -- improving these regulatory codes to adequately guide the utilities. The Commission has full power to address the defects and omissions in their General Orders, specifically the complete absence of any mention of computerized circuit breakers. Most importantly, Wildfire Mitigation Plans should move forward upon the initiative of the Commission and its engineering staff, rather than allowing utilities to set their own regulations. The goal is to dramatically improve the fire and electrocution safety performance of all utilities operating in California. SB 901 did not obstruct the Commission's authority.

PG&E has 22,000 miles of antiquated, unsafe bare 6-gauge wire, and General Order 95 still allows this. It is time to take this inadequate wire out of the code, so it's no longer legal to use it. The Office of Safety Advocate (OSA) had clearly stated this in the past, but was ignored. Now, the OSA has now been disbanded and all its valuable safety recommendations disregarded. The new Wildfire Safety Division has taken over the duties of the OSA, but there is no

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sign that its valuable analyses and recommendations were used as guidelines by the utilities, or that the information is being used by the CPUC, so the WSD should be urged to recommend that it be so.

Only the most robust agenda of replacing unsafe conductor, and installing computerized protective relays, will make California utilities fire-safe and we await the WSD to come forward with those kind of recommendations.

Thanks,

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