

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ENERGY DIVISION

RESOLUTION E-3493
JANUARY 7, 1998

R E S O L U T I O N

RESOLUTION E-3493. PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY (PG&E) REQUESTS TWO SEPARATE DEVIATIONS FROM CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES CODE SECTION 320 IN THE CITY OF PLACERVILLE. PG&E IS AUTHORIZED THE RELOCATION OF ONE POLE NEAR BLAIRS LANE AND BACO DRIVE. PG&E IS DENIED THE RELOCATION OF TWO POLES NEAR MOSQUITO ROAD AND ANDERSON WAY. BOTH SITES ARE WITHIN THE HIGHWAY 50 SCENIC CORRIDOR.

BY LETTER DATED APRIL 12, 1996, FROM PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY.

SUMMARY

1. On April 12, 1996, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requested authority for two deviations from the undergrounding requirements of Section 320 of the Public Utilities Code. These requests involve two sites: (1) a pole relocation in the vicinity of Blairs Lane and Baco Drive (Blairs Lane); and (2) the relocation of two poles in the vicinity of Mosquito Road and Anderson Way (Mosquito Road). Both sites are in the City of Placerville and within the Highway 50 Scenic Corridor.
2. No protests were received for these deviation requests.
3. The City of Placerville and PG&E recommend the deviations based on foliage that would hide the overhead facilities from view. The Commission's Utilities Safety Branch conducted a General Order 95 inspection and found several violations of that Order as noted, including tree trimming violations (see Background), at the Mosquito Road site.
4. Because of the legislative policy promoting underground electric facilities, PG&E needs Commission approval for overhead installations in a scenic corridor.
5. This Resolution approves the request for the Blairs Lane site and denies the request for the Mosquito Road site based on economic feasibility. The Blairs Lane deviation is granted through the end of 1998 and expires at 12:00 a.m. on January 1, 1999.

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BACKGROUND

1. California Public Utilities Code Section 320 (P.U. Code Section 320) was enacted in 1971, Chapter 1697, and reads in part as follows:

The legislature hereby declares that it is the policy of this state to achieve, whenever feasible and not inconsistent with sound environmental planning, the undergrounding of all future electric and communication distribution facilities which are proposed to be erected in proximity to any highway designated a state scenic highway pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division 1 of the Streets and Highways Code and which would be visible from such scenic highways if erected above ground. The Commission shall prepare and adopt by December 31, 1972, a statewide plan and schedule for the undergrounding of all such utility distribution facilities in accordance with the aforesaid policy and the rules of the Commission relating to the undergrounding of facilities and...

The Commission shall require compliance with the plan upon its adoption.

2. The Commission is responsible for the administration of Section 320 of the P.U. Code. After hearings conducted in Case 9364, Commission Decision (D) 80864 implemented the State Legislation. D.80864 states that:

In order to facilitate administration, letter requests for deviations will be accepted, reviewed by the Commission staff and, where appropriate, approved by Commission resolution. (74 CPUC 457, D.80864)

3. Commission D.80864 stipulates that no communication or electric utility shall install overhead distribution facilities "in proximity to" and "visible from" any prescribed corridor on a designated scenic highway in California unless a showing is made before the Commission and a finding made by the Commission that undergrounding would not be feasible or would be inconsistent with sound environmental planning. The Decision also defines "in proximity to" as being within 1,000 feet from each edge of the right-of-way of designated State Scenic Highways.

4. By letter dated April 12, 1996, PG&E requested two deviations from the legislative undergrounding requirements. These requests involve two sites: (1) a pole relocation in the vicinity of Blairs Lane; and (2) the relocation of two poles in the vicinity of Mosquito Road to clear road improvements for a subdivision. Both sites are in the City of Placerville and within the Highway 50 Scenic Corridor.

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5. The City of Placerville and PG&E recommend granting the two deviation requests. The basis for their recommendation is that the poles will not be visible to motorists traveling on Highway 50 because of a foliage screen.
6. The City of Placerville also indicates that it did not desire undergrounding at the time the projects were approved.
7. The Blairs Lane facilities are part of the Weatherstone Village, which is approximately 600 feet south of State Scenic Highway 50. The facilities are less than 1,000 feet from Highway 50. Therefore the undergrounding requirements are applicable. What PG&E is requesting would involve relocating one pole and approximately 400 feet of cable, which would cost an estimated \$2,500. The cost of undergrounding is estimated at \$75,000 because the line is a main feed out of Broadway Substation and substantial work would be required to place the facilities underground.
8. Mosquito Road is approximately 700 feet north of State Scenic Highway 50. This relocation is requested for two poles to allow the developer to improve the road to Cottonwood Subdivision, his proposed 25-unit development. The estimated cost to underground the two poles is \$13,000, while the cost for overhead facilities is \$4,800.
9. The Commission's Utilities Safety Branch (USB) conducted a General Order 95 inspection of the overhead facilities in the vicinity of Mosquito Road, and found several violations, citing the following: "The facilities inspected for compliance with GO 95 were the three contiguous utility poles and associated conductor spans that PG&E proposed to relocate." The inspection began at the intersection of Highway 50 with Anderson Way and continued along the highway to Franklin Court.

The following lists the location of each pole inspected at the Mosquito Road site and the corresponding GO-95 violation:

<u>Pole Location</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Franklin Court at intersection with Anderson Way	Rule 31.1 violation-- phone company must transfer facilities to new pole.
Second pole on Franklin Court	Rule 51.6 violation-- incomplete high voltage sign. Also, tree trimming will be required between here and the next pole by January 23, 1998.
Third pole west of Oakmont Drive (PG&E pole #1153B6)	Rule 51.6 violation--no high voltage sign.

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10. Even though the previous paragraph identifies three poles with GO-95 violations, PG&E has requested P.U. Code Section 320 deviations only for the second and third poles (located on Franklin Court, and PG&E Pole #1153B6, west of Oakmont Drive).

11. The Utilities Safety Branch will pursue the matter of these GO-95 violations as it deems appropriate.

NOTICE

1. Notice of these requested deviations was placed in the Commission Calendar on May 15, 1997.

PROTESTS

1. No protests were recorded for either deviation request.

DISCUSSION

1. Both deviation requests should be evaluated on the bases of environmental planning and economic feasibility.

2. The proposed changes are not visible from State Scenic Highway 50 due to foliage. The Energy Division does not believe that lack of visibility alone would meet the criteria for a deviation. No other issues have been raised to suggest that overhead installations at these locations would be environmentally superior to underground installations.

3. The cost differential between undergrounding (\$75,000) and overhead relocation (\$2,500) at the Blairs Lane site equals \$72,500. The ratio of underground cost to overhead cost is 30.0, and the cost of undergrounding would have a significant impact on Weatherstone Village's overall cost.

4. In previous Commission decisions where the cost of undergrounding substantially exceeded the cost of overhead facilities, the Commission has granted deviations on the basis of economic unfeasibility. The cost of undergrounding substantially exceeds the cost of relocating the overhead facilities at Blairs Lane. The Energy Division therefore recommends that the Commission grant PG&E's request to relocate one overhead pole at the Blairs Lane location.

5. PG&E has indicated that the developer intends to complete the work associated with the deviation request sometime in 1998. Hence, the Energy Division recommends that the Blairs Lane deviation be granted only through the end of 1998, to expire at 12:00 a.m. on January 1, 1999.

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6. The cost differential between undergrounding (\$13,000) and overhead relocation (\$4,800) at the Mosquito Road site equals \$8,200. The ratio of underground cost to overhead cost is 2.7. The total amount and the ratio of costs is small. In addition, the cost is small compared to the cost of the 25 condominiums in the development. The cost of undergrounding seems reasonable, and the Energy Division therefore recommends that the Commission deny PG&E's request to relocate two overhead poles at the Mosquito Road location.

7. The Utilities Safety Branch conducted an inspection at the Mosquito Road location and discovered GO-95 violations on three utility poles. USB will pursue this matter in a separate forum.

FINDINGS

1. By letter dated April 12, 1996, PG&E requests two separate deviations from California P.U. Code Section 320. Both of the proposed relocations are within 1,000 feet of Scenic Highway 50.

2. One site is in the vicinity of Blairs Lane and Baco Drive. The other site is in the vicinity of Mosquito Road and Anderson Way.

3. Both sites are hidden from Scenic Highway 50 by shrubbery and trees. No issues have been raised concerning the environmental impacts of overhead facilities compared to underground installation.

4. The estimated cost of undergrounding the Blairs Lane electrical pole is \$75,000. The cost of equivalent overhead facilities is \$2,500. This cost disparity renders the underground alternative impractical. The deviation request is reasonable, consistent with other Resolutions, and should be authorized.

5. The Blairs Lane deviation should be approved and granted through the end of 1998, to expire at 12:00 a.m. on January 1, 1999.

6. The estimated cost of the Mosquito Road undergrounding is \$13,000, compared to \$4,800 for an overhead relocation. This cost disparity should not be a hardship to the developer, since the cost can be spread over a 25-unit development. Based on the minor financial impact of an underground line, this deviation request should be denied.

7. The Commission's Utilities Safety Branch conducted a GO-95 inspection of the overhead facilities at the Mosquito Road site and discovered violations on three poles.

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THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Pacific Gas and Electric Company's request to relocate an existing overhead line and pole in order to widen a road in the vicinity of Blairs Lane and Baco Drive is approved. This P.U. Code Section 320 deviation is granted through the end of 1998 and expires at 12:00 a.m. on January 1, 1999.
2. Pacific Gas and Electric Company's request to relocate two poles to serve a proposed development in the vicinity of Mosquito Road and Anderson Way is denied.
3. This Resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that this Resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on January 7, 1998. The following Commissioners approved it:



WESLEY M. FRANKLIN
Executive Director

P. Gregory Conlon, President
Jessie J. Knight, Jr.
Henry M. Duque
Josiah L. Neeper
Richard A. Bilas
Commissioners