

Remarks on COVID-19 Actions

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Emerging Trends Commissioner Committee Meeting

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From the very first days of the Emergency Declaration from the Governor, the CPUC started to act to protect customers, impacted industries, and the utilities from negative economic impacts and the reliability risks.

Before I move into a list of actions the CPUC took in the energy sector I want to quickly acknowledge that this was a team effort with leadership from the Commissioners and 100s of hours of dedicated staff time. Beyond that, a critical element of our approach was the helpful input from industry groups and customer advocates who helped us identify possible problems and solutions quickly.

Actions we have taken to date:

- 1) Through a directive from Executive Director Alice Stebbins, the CPUC directed the utilities to institute a range of consumer protections that are automatically triggered when wildfires or other natural disasters occur. The protections include suspension of disconnection for non-payment, provision of flexible payment plan options, and support to low income customers on CARE and FERA. The letter from Executive Director Stebbins was later ratified by a vote of the full CPUC.
 - a. Also we should not that the CPUC has approved a major decision to reduce the number of disconnections for non-payment, providing consumer protections beyond the

immediate shelter in place orders.

- 2) Created a process to provide financial assistance to Energy Savings Assistance Program contractors to keep workers employed. This involved multiple letters and Resolutions.
- 3) Worked with IOUs to alter and increase CARE outreach – there has been an 10 % overall growth in CARE participation over the last 12 weeks.
 - a. Directed the IOUs to work with Community Based Organizations doing marketing and outreach on CARE so that the outreach efforts could move from face-to-face to virtual approaches.
- 4) Changed all messaging for the Energy Upgrade California marketing program for Energy Efficiency to focus on energy savings tips that are most impactful with shelter at home.
- 5) Took multiple actions to reduce the impacts of high bills due to the shelter at home orders, including:
 - a. Changed the timing of the electric Climate Credit Payments to help reduce bills while shelter at home was still in place.
 - b. Temporarily reduced the rate impacts of the high usage charges.
 - c. Delayed the timing of a natural gas rate increase for some customers.
 - d. Modified summer time of use rates for SDG&E customers to reduce bills.

The CPUC has also issued a Proposed Decision to automatically enroll PG&E customers in disadvantaged communities onto a more discounted “green tariff” rate plan.

- 6) Hosted a workshop to seek input on challenges faced by the clean energy industry that work in customer homes. From that workshop we developed more actions and are continuing to develop more.
 - a. Worked with Utilities to allow for more virtual inspections for installation of behind the meter solar and storage. Granted extensions of project deadlines for BTM projects that could not be installed due to shelter at home.
 - b. Took steps in response to specific suggestions from the Energy Efficiency industry including:
 - i. Remove on-site inspection requirements for projects already installed and awaiting final post-installation inspection.
 - ii. Waive any onsite survey sub-sample requirements for Evaluation, Measurement and Verification (EM&V) work.
 - c. Directed Energy Efficiency Program Administrators to expand existing programs that are easy to implement in a shelter in place environment and where there is greater savings opportunity, such as Home Energy Reports that are mailed to customers and focus on increasing residential energy savings and programs targeting schools or other buildings currently unoccupied during the stay-at-home orders where on-site work can be performed with minimal contact.
- 7) Provided directives to Energy Efficiency and ESA Program Administrators to instruct their contractors to follow state or

local workplace safety directives – whichever is more restrictive -- to allow workers to restart work as shelter at home restrictions are lifted.

- 1) We are also working with PG&E to review their SGIP marketing plans and a pilot proposal for paying a portion of the rebate upfront – this will improve cashflow in some cases and will also help lower income customers participate in the program.
- 2) We have also begun collecting weekly data from the utilities to monitor the impact of the above efforts and to have visibility to see upcoming challenges. In coordination with the Energy Commission and Cal ISO we share data and closely monitor electric reliability issues associated with shelter in place.

The Pandemic is also directly impacting the utilities' bottom lines. They have some increased costs related to maintaining reliability and protecting their employees and customers from the pandemic but they are also not collecting the revenue they need to cover authorized expenses. In order to start the process of allowing the utilities to recover new costs and to ensure they remain financially stable we have allowed the utilities to open new “memorandum accounts” to track costs and are already discussing how to address future impacts of their current under collections.

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