

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Safety and Enforcement Division

Incident Investigation Report

Report Date: 11/22/2013

Investigator: Raymond Cho

Incident Number: E20121003-02

Utility: Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)

Date and Time of Incident: 10/01/2012, 1415 hours

Location of Incident: [REDACTED]
Comptche, CA 95427
County: Mendocino

Summary of Incident:

On October 1, 2012 a fire started and began spreading upon properties on [REDACTED] Rd in Comptche. The fire consumed structures and many acres of grassland east of Flynn Creek Rd. My investigation revealed that the fire was caused when a tree branch made contact with a PG&E 12 kV overhead conductor.

Fatality/Injury: None reported

Property Damage: \$130,000 damage to private property; \$20,000 damage to PG&E facilities

Utility Facilities involved: OH primary conductors, 12kV circuit, Philo 1102 Circuit

Witnesses:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Phone</u>
1. [REDACTED]	PG&E	415.973.2782
2. Kyle Pinson	Cal Fire, Badge #76	707.459.7414
3. [REDACTED]	PG&E Compliance	925.415.6776
4. [REDACTED]	PG&E Vegetation Management	805.720.1909
5. [REDACTED]	Western ECI, Utility Forester	[REDACTED]

Evidence:

<u>Source</u>	<u>Description</u>
1. PG&E	Initial Online Incident Report
2. PG&E	Final Electric Incident Report Form
3. CPUC	Cal Fire Report Request on 3/22/13
4. CPUC	Data Request 1 on 3/25/13
5. PG&E	Response 1 on 4/18/13
6. Cal Fire	Cal Fire Report on 6/24/13
7. CPUC	Data Request 2 on 8/14/13
8. PG&E	Response 2 on 10/4/13
9. CPUC	Data Request 3 on 10/16/13
10. PG&E	Response 3 on 11/7/13
11. CPUC	Data Request 4 on 11/7/13
12. PG&E	Response 4 on 11/12/13
13. PG&E/CPUC/Western ECI	Conversation with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Observations and Findings:

On October 1, 2012 a fire started near [REDACTED] Rd at approximately 1415 hours. The fire spread and destroyed a residential structure and nine (9) out buildings. No other outages resulted from the fire.

On August 15, 2012, Western ECI (WECI), the vegetation management contractors hired by PG&E, noted that there were three (3) trees that were scheduled to be trimmed by 18 feet before November 2, 2012. However, the trimming was not completed prior to the incident. One of the trees, a Bay Laurel tree (Tree #2), was located under PG&E's 12 kV conductors in proximity of the fire origin.

An investigation performed by CAL FIRE revealed a black stain on a 12 kV conductor. A PG&E representative and the CAL FIRE investigator came to the same conclusion that the tree came in contact with the 12 kV conductor and started the fire. In addition, CAL FIRE and PG&E measured the clearance between the Bay Laurel tree and one of the 12 kV the overhead conductors that was located above the tree, and found it to be 12 inches. This measurement represents the clearance of the remaining parts of the tree after the fire. This indicates that prior to the fire, the clearance between the tree and the 12 kV conductors was less than 12 inches.

GO 95, Rule 35, requires a minimum eighteen (18) inches between vegetation and 12 kV overhead conductors. My investigation revealed that the clearance between the Bay laurel tree and the conductor could not have been more than 12 inches prior to the fire.

Preliminary Statement of Pertinent General Order, Public Utilities Code Requirements and/or Federal Requirements:

<u>General Order</u>	<u>GO Rule</u>
1. GO 165	Section III
2. GO 95	Rule 35
3. GO 95	Rule 37, Table 1, Case 13

Conclusion:

My investigation found that PG&E was in violation of GO 95, Rule 35, for failing to maintain 18 inches clearance between its 12 kV overhead conductor and a Bay Laurel tree. This resulted in the tree making contact with the conductor and starting a fire.