

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking Regarding
Emergency Disaster Relief Program.

Rulemaking 18-03-011
(Filed March 22, 2018)

**REPLY COMMENTS OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
ON THE PROPOSED DECISION ADOPTING WIRELESS PROVIDER RESILIENCY
STRATEGIES**

July 6, 2020

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The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) respectfully submits these Reply Comments on the Proposed Decision Adopting Wireless Provider Resiliency Strategies, issued in this Rulemaking (R.) 18-03-011 (Disaster Relief) on June 11, 2020 (Proposed Decision). These Reply Comments are timely filed and served pursuant to the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure.

**I.
THE PROPOSED DECISION SHOULD BE MODIFIED TO ADDRESS BACKHAUL.**

CSAC agrees with the recommendation made by The Utility Reform Network, Access Humboldt, the Center for Accessible Technology, the National Consumer Law Center and Communications Workers of America, District 9 (the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA) that the Proposed Decision should be modified to address “backhaul, both in terms of backup power and network resiliency requirements.”¹ As the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA correctly state:

[T]he PD does not address a key structural element of the wireless network, namely that wireless providers rely on wireless providers for backhaul communications and to connect their switches to the public switched telephone network (PSTN).[Citation omitted] If a backhaul route fails and the wireless provider does not have an alternative source of backhaul, the wireless service will fail, and the work to bolster power at cell sites will be for naught.²

¹ Opening Comments of the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA, at p. 4.

² *Id.*, at p. 4.

In addition, CSAC agrees with the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA that the Commission must “develop backhaul requirements as quickly ...” and that the Commission should obtain “critical network reliability data, including backhaul and, ..., the location of key remote terminals that must function in high fire threat areas where wireless service is not available.”³

**II.
THE PROPOSED DECISION SHOULD CONSIDER WIRELESS RESILIENCY
REQUIREMENTS FOR AREAS OUTSIDE TIER 2 AND TIER 3 OF HIGH FIRE
THREAT DISTRICTS.**

CSAC believes that the Proposed Decision should either be modified to include wireless resiliency requirements for those areas that are outside Tier 2 and Tier 3 of High Fire Threat Districts or include a commitment to issue another Proposed Decision to create these requirements. In its Opening Comments, CSAC urged “the Commission to consider expanding [the 72-hour backup power] requirement to customers in Zone 1 of the High Fire Threat District because many Zone 1 areas are small towns in counties that need backup power and coverage the most.”⁴ CSAC supports the argument made by the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) that the 72-hour backup power requirement should not be limited to “portions of a wireless service provider’s service territories that are located in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts (HFTD).”⁵ As such, CSAC agrees with RCRC that “the Proposed Decision should be modified to expand the 72-hour backup requirement to additionally include those

³ Opening Comments of the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA, at pp. 5 and 7.

⁴ Opening Comments of CSAC, at pp. 2-3.

⁵ Opening Comments of RCRC, at p. 7.

wireless facilities that lost power during two or more discrete Public Safety power Shutoff (PSPS) events.⁶

The Public Advocates Office correctly states that “[m]any of the communications outages that occurred during the 2019 PSPS events occurred in areas outside of HFTDs. Disasters and commercial power outages impact Californians living in many parts of the state, not just those in HFTDs”⁷ Therefore, if the Commission is not prepared to modify the Proposed Decision to include requirements for areas outside of HFTDs, the Commission should adopt Public Advocates Office recommendation that the Proposed Decision “=be revised to set a deadline to release an additional proposed decision that outlines backup power requirements for all wireless facilities throughout California by no later than September 1, 2020.”⁸

III.
CSAC AGREES WITH THE PUBLIC ADVOCATES OFFICE AND THE JOINT CONSUMER ADVOCATES AND CWA THAT THE WIRELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS SHOULD PROVIDE UPDATES TO THEIR COMMUNICATION RESILIENCY PLANS

Both the Public Advocates Office and the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA recommend that the Proposed Decision be modified to require updates from the wireless service providers to their Communication Resiliency Plans (Resiliency Plans).⁹ CSAC wholly supports this recommendation. The Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA correctly note that many of the Resiliency Plan items “change rapidly” and “it is important for the Commission to track progress in advance of the yearly fire seasons.”¹⁰ Specifically, CSAC concurs with the Joint Consumer

⁶ *Id.*, at p. 3.

⁷ Opening Comments of the Public Advocates Office, at p. 10.

⁸ *Id.*, at p. 9.

⁹ Opening Comments of the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA, at p. 11 and Opening Comments of the Public Advocates Office, at p. 6.

¹⁰ Opening Comments of the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA, at p. 11.

Advocates and CWA that “providers should submit quarterly updates describing changes to key network elements that have taken place during the quarter.”¹¹

IV. CONCLUSION

CSAC appreciates the opportunity to provide these Reply Comments on the Proposed Decision. The Proposed Decision should be modified to include backhaul requirements. In addition, the Proposed Decision should be modified to include wireless service resiliency requirements for areas outside of HTFDs or include a commitment to issuing a Proposed Decision to address those issues. Lastly, the Resiliency Plans should be updated quarterly.

Respectfully submitted,

July 6, 2020

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¹¹ Opening Comments of the Joint Consumer Advocates and CWA, at p. 11.