



California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

CPUC CONTINUES PUBLIC SAFETY ACTIONS AS CLIMATE INCREASES RISK OF WILDFIRES

SAN FRANCISCO, May 25, 2018 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today said it will continue to identify ways to help reduce the likelihood of utility involvement in wildfires, which are more prevalent than ever before due to climate change. The CPUC will also continue its staff investigations into prior wildfires and incorporate the findings of CAL FIRE's report released today regarding the Honey, La Porte, Lobo, and McCourtney fires.

Since the 2017 wildfires in Northern and Southern California, the CPUC has been working with CAL FIRE on investigations through a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the two agencies. CAL FIRE is the first responder and determines the sources of ignition. The CPUC's Safety and Enforcement Division investigates whether a utility was out of compliance with CPUC rules and regulations if a utility's infrastructure caused or contributed to a fire.

The CAL FIRE report issued today regarding the Honey, La Porte, Lobo, and McCourtney fires will be used to inform the Safety and Enforcement Division's investigation. If the Safety and Enforcement Division determines that utility violations of rules or regulations caused or contributed to the fires (including the fires that are the subject of CAL FIRE's report), it can issue Citations, or request that the CPUC's Commissioners open a formal process to consider fines and penalties.

Apart from its staff investigations, the CPUC is committed to mitigating utility involvement in wildfires and ensuring that consumers have access to vital utility services in the event of a disaster.

In January 2018, the CPUC adopted a statewide Fire-Threat Map that will help in implementing fire mitigation rules. The map includes a broader definition of fire threat, and shows how dramatically



climate impacts are increasing fire risks. Land that is covered in the elevated, high, and tree mortality fire hazard areas has grown from 31,000 square miles to 70,000 square miles, which is 44 percent of California's total land area.

The Fire-Threat Map will help with implementation of significant fire mitigation rules for utility poles and wires, including major new rules for vegetation management, which the CPUC adopted in December 2017.

The CPUC also broadened its look at consumer protection, and in April 2018 initiated a new proceeding to consider adoption of post-disaster consumer protection measures in emergency situations for all utilities under the CPUC's jurisdiction.

Further, the CPUC has elevated wildfire mitigation into its internal operations and structure. In January 2018, the CPUC established a Wildfire Mitigation Section within its Electric Safety and Reliability Branch in the Safety and Enforcement Division as part of the passage of Senate Bill 1028. Working closely with CAL FIRE, Cal OES, and regulated utilities, the Wildfire Mitigation Section is developing requirements for utility wildfire mitigation plans, developing protocols for utility reporting, and incorporating wildfire mitigation efforts into utility audits and inspections.

Other wildfire prevention-related actions by the CPUC include:

- Consideration of extending the de-energization reasonableness, public notification, mitigation, and reporting requirements to all investor-owned electric utilities, and requiring utilities to notify customers of a de-energization event prior to shutting off power.
- Holding a Fire Safety and Utility Infrastructure En Banc in January 2018 to discuss fire threat in California and additional steps that can be taken to mitigate fire hazards to utility infrastructure.
- An examination into whether the existing stock of utility poles and underground conduits in the state have sufficient space to support ubiquitous, competitive, and affordable telecommunications services, while keeping the pole and conduit infrastructure safe for residents, workers, and the environment. The CPUC is also considering creating a database that will allow stakeholders to share key information about utility poles with each other and the CPUC. The CPUC has held public meetings and tours to discuss these issues.



The CPUC regulates services and utilities, protects consumers, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians' access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. For more information on the CPUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov.

###

