



ALJ/KWZ/mef 5/11/2021

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05/11/21
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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Order Instituting Rulemaking to
Address Energy Utility Customer Bill
Debt Accumulated During the
COVID-19 Pandemic.

Rulemaking 21-02-014

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING
SETTING HEARING TO DISCUSS UTILITY PROGRESS LEVERAGING
FEDERAL FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR UTILITY ARREARAGES**

On April 5, 2021, energy utility respondents¹ in this proceeding were directed to report on their progress facilitating the payment of emergency federal funding on qualifying energy utility customer accounts.² Energy utilities were to identify a sample group of customers, likely eligible and willing to apply to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) administered by the State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and track the progress of their applications. Specifically, energy utilities report weekly on the number of customers applied, accounts validated, payments received, and reduction in utility bill debt. The progress reported to-date raises questions about compliance with this directive.

¹ Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), Southern California Edison Company (SCE), San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E), Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), Southwest Gas Corporation (Southwest Gas), PacifiCorp, Liberty Utilities (Calpeco Electric) LLC and Bear Valley Electric Company, Inc. (Bear Valley).

² On April 15, 2021 the Commission's Executive Director issued a letter authorizing the energy utilities to "validate utility customer information of applicants for ERAP [Emergency Rental Assistance Program], upon HCD's [State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development] request or upon request of a partner city, county, or tribe, for the purpose of administering relief."

The reports are “intended to expose any barriers to accessing the HCD ERAP relief funding so that barriers may be promptly addressed.”³ The results, presented below, indicate barriers that threaten the receipt of much needed assistance.⁴

	PG&E	SCE	SoCalGas	SDG&E	Southwest Gas	Pacificorp	Bear Valley	Liberty
Projected number of customers needed to contact to meet minimum number of participants⁵	700	300	733	100	110	31	20	30
Reporting Metric Required by ALJ Ruling of April 5, 2021								
1. Number of customers agreed to apply	46	ND	221	ND	0	0	ND	ND
2. Number of customers that have applied	0	ND	26	ND	0	0	ND	ND
3. Number of customers validated	0	0	0	ND	0	0	ND	ND
4. Number of customers that received relief	0	0	0 ⁶	ND ⁷	0	0	ND	ND
5. Total amount of relief received by customers	\$0	\$0	\$0 ⁸	ND	\$0	\$0	ND	ND
6. Percent of validated customer arrears forgiven	0%	0%	0%	ND	0%	0%	ND	ND

Source: Utility reports as of 5/10/2021

³ Administrative Law Judge’s Ruling (ALJ Ruling) of April 5, 2021 Directing Utility Action to Leverage Federal Funding Available for Utility Arrearages.

⁴ Metrics for which the utility has not yet provided data are designated “ND” for “No Data.”

⁵ PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, CalPeco Electric and Bear Valley have not estimated the number of customers they need to contact to meet the number of required applications in the ALJ Ruling. Projected number of customers needed to contact shown in this table for PG&E, SCE, SDG&E, CalPeco Electric and Bear Valley are made by the California Public Utility Commission’s Energy Division, according to the following methodology: counting the number of Local Provider Networks in each energy utility service territory, multiplying that number by 5, adding 15 to apply through statewide portal, adding another 20 for customers not enrolled in low-income programs, and rounding up to account for customers who are ineligible or refuse contact.

⁶ Independent of tracking the ERAP applications of a sample group of customers as directed in the ALJ Ruling, SoCalGas reports receipt of ERAP payments on 460 customer accounts.

⁷ Independent of tracking the ERAP applications of a sample group of customers as directed in the ALJ Ruling, SDG&E reports receipt of ERAP payments on 60 customer accounts.

⁸ Independent of tracking the ERAP applications of a sample group of customers as directed in the ALJ Ruling, SoCalGas reports ERAP payments of \$110,420.24 on 460 customer accounts.

Accordingly, we set an evidentiary hearing on Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 10 a.m., to understand why energy utilities have yet to report ERAP payments on customer accounts or validation of utility customer information. The hearing will be held remotely. Parties' witnesses and counsel should be prepared to participate on video and audio via WebEx, at links to be provided directly to them. PG&E, SDG&E, SCE, and SoCalGas as well as PacifiCorp, CalPeco Electric, Bear Valley, and Southwest Gas should, by Friday, May 21, 2021 identify their witness who will provide updated metrics and discuss the impact of ERAP payments on arrearages. The public may watch and listen via WebEx or phone through the following links.

R.21-02-014 Evidentiary Hearing

Thursday, May 27, 2021 10:00 a.m.

Public WebEx Link:

<https://cpuc.webex.com/cpuc/onstage/g.php?MTID=e0b11d9551369b83c29a37f1fbe350699>

Public Password: 20210527

Toll-free dial-in for listen-only audio access:

1-855-282-6330

Access code: 187 230 1561

The hearing will be preceded by a status conference on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 9 a.m. to identify party interest in questioning the witnesses. The status conference will be held remotely. Parties' witnesses and counsel should be prepared to participate on video and audio via WebEx, at links to be provided directly to them. The public may watch and listen via WebEx or phone through the following links.

R.21-02-014 Status Conference

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 9:00 a.m.

Public WebEx Link:

<https://cpuc.webex.com/cpuc/onstage/g.php?MTID=e370a729886be66345b232c48f436560b>

Public Password: 20210526

Toll-free dial-in for listen-only audio access:

1-855-282-6330

Access code: 187 804 0657

The ALJ's Ruling of April 5, 2021 directed the energy utilities to identify customers, initiate contact with their customers and follow these customers until receipt of funds or denial. Such reporting did not and does not require any tracking or reporting from the HCD, their Local Provider Network (LPN), or administrators of locally-administered ("Option B" and "Option C") ERAPs. To the extent any energy utility has communicated to HCD, other ERAP administrators, or organizations in the HCD LPN a reporting requirement or requested Personally Identifiable Information beyond that necessary to validate an ERAP application, they should immediately desist from any requests or demands and rescind any outstanding requests. Only the energy utilities are able to, and are responsible for, tracking the progress of their customers' applications and reporting to the Commission.

IT IS RULED that:

1. Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison Company, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, Southern California Gas Company, Southwest Gas Corporation, PacifiCorp, Liberty Utilities (Calpeco Electric) LLC and Bear Valley Electric Company, Inc. should immediately desist from any requests for tracking and reporting and rescind any outstanding requests made to the State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development, their Local Provider Network, or administrators of locally-administered ("Option B" and "Option C") Emergency Rental Assistance Programs.

2. A remote status conference to prepare for evidentiary hearing is set for Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 9 am via the WebEx platform at the access information above.

3. An evidentiary hearing is set for Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 10 a.m., via the WebEx platform at the access information above.

4. By May 21, 2021, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison Company, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, Southern California Gas Company, Southwest Gas Corporation, PacifiCorp, Liberty Utilities (Calpeco Electric) LLC and Bear Valley Electric Company, Inc. are directed to identify the witness who will appear at the hearing, via email to the service list of this proceeding.

5. Other parties to this proceeding may request time to question the energy utilities' witnesses at the May 26, 2021 status conference.

Dated May 11, 2021, at San Francisco, California.

/s/ CAMILLE WATTS-ZAGHA
Camille Watts-Zagha
Administrative Law Judge