



August 9, 2019

Senator Jerry Hill
California Senate Subcommittee on Gas,
Electric, and Transportation Safety
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Hill,

The California In-Home Supportive Services Consumer Alliance (CICA) is writing in order to share concerns with the Statewide Utility “Community Wildfire Safety Program: Power Safety Power Shut-off (PSPS)” plans in the name of safety.

CICA is a non-profit organization representing over 500,000 In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) Consumers and their Care Providers. Currently, we have 34 County IHSS Advisory Committees as members with our mission to provide and share information to improve the IHSS program.

The Community Wildfire Safety Program is an important step towards preventing the spread of fires and creating more damage to our private, State and National Forests within the State of California. Pacific Gas & Electricity (only company that has reached out to this organization) have made a presentation on a monthly Statewide call about the program (July 2019).

All three of the major utility companies have provided advice and some assistance about be prepared for the Power Safety Power Shut-off (PSPS), but none addressed the needs of the disabled in their plans. Part of the

reason, not unusual, plans were created not involving members of the disabled population who depend on the power to live (If they did, they would have considered that some of the recommendations provided was not financially possible.).

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It is important to recognize there are individuals on fixed incomes from Supplemental Security Income, State Supplemental Payments, Social Security Disability, and low Social Security that struggle month to month for purchasing food, paying utility bills and providing shelter for themselves.

The proposed shutoffs endanger people who rely on power for their wheelchairs, elevators to exit and enter their buildings, and medical equipment such as ventilators, dialysis, oxygen, and filters. Some people need power 24/7 just to breathe. Power outages during a heat wave are very dangerous. Few, if any, local community centers have back-up power to share with the general public.

Across California, our energy utilities, such as PG&E, tell us to “be prepared,” but offer mere notification (under certain circumstances) that a shutoff will occur. Being prepared may mean to purchase a generator that needs to be safely connected to a residence and watched constantly for safety.

Or another option, for an individual to be transferred to a Medical Facility or Care Facility, which are already over-booked and can in some cases cause more harm than be a benefit because of the lack of staff.

A couple questions asked:

- Why is my power being shut off, for a fire that is 50 to 100 miles away from my home?
- If I go to a shelter or other Medical Facility, is there adequate space for the hospital bed I use at home? Who pays for the stay away from my home?
- Who pays for my Care Provider while I am away? Can they accompany me to a shelter?

The Community Wildfire Prevention Program is something needed, but it does not take into consideration of the needs of the vulnerable population depending on the power to their homes when a fire is no where ear their homes!

At the time of preparing this letter, it was found the Senator McGuire has proposed Senate Bill 560, which requires that police, fire, sheriff departments,

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health care facilities and telecommunication providers receive prior notification of de-energizing events when their facilities will be impacted. This will help ensure the health and well-being of neighbors during power shutdowns.

In the announcement SB 560, Senator McGuire said. “There are medically fragile residents who are on oxygen and need electricity to survive. We have to know that first responders who will answer at their time of need get advanced warning when the power is being shut down.”

We agree with this. We believe it should be stressed that first responders become familiar with local disabled individuals, not just organizations. The needs of individuals with disabilities do not fit in generalized molds that are so often created to meet the needs individuals with a disability have.

Hopefully, our representatives will, as asked of the local first responders, involve the disabled in determining programs regarding their lives. The disabled and senior population need to be present in discussions.

If you need assistance or have questions, you can call me at (707) 441-1974

Respectfully shared,

Charles Bean

CHARLES BEAN
Executive Director

cc: California Senate Subcommittee on Gas,
Electric, and Transportation Safety Committee