

Laurel Gazza

From: Frances Herbert
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2016 7:51 AM
To: Agenda Management Support
Subject: Item 36 on 6/14 BoS Consent Agenda
Attachments: PGE Community Pipeline Safety_Santa Cruz County Board Letter_061316.pdf; ATT00001.htm

From: "Foster, Joe" <J4FU@pge.com>
Date: June 13, 2016 at 9:52:59 PM PDT
To: "zach.friend@santacruzcounty.us" <zach.friend@santacruzcounty.us>
Subject: Letter re: Item 36 on 6/14 BoS Consent Agenda

Zach,

Please find the attached related to the item on tomorrow's agenda.

Thank you,

Joe Foster
Public Affairs | Pacific Gas and Electric Company
356 E. Alisal St., Salinas, CA 93901
615 7th Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062
(831) 710-7648 - mobile



Pacific Gas and Electric Company
356 East Alisal Street
Salinas, CA 93901

June 13, 2016

Board of Supervisors
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean Street, Rm. 525
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Information regarding proposed important gas safety work in Santa Cruz County

Dear Members of the Board:

On behalf of Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), thank you again for your ongoing participation in discussions regarding PG&E’s Community Pipeline Safety Initiative. This important gas safety program will help maintain the safety of the gas system by improving emergency access and preventing damage to the natural gas transmission pipelines serving the residents of Santa Cruz County. We value feedback from the County and local community members, and are committed to answering questions, addressing concerns and working collaboratively as good partners on this critical gas safety work.

As we’ve shared during ongoing conversations over the past six months with County staff and the local community, we are not moving forward with any work in Santa Cruz County until we have reached agreements with both the County and individual property owners.

The purpose of this letter is to provide information regarding:

- 1) PG&E’s Community Pipeline Safety Initiative, including ongoing collaboration with the County and broader outreach efforts to ensure the community is informed of this work and has the opportunity to get their questions answered;
- 2) Information on the research and best practices being used to guide this important safety work;
- 3) The tree-by-tree review that is conducted as part of this program, including the proposed work in Santa Cruz County; and
- 4) How PG&E is working to minimize environmental impacts related to this work.

Community Pipeline Safety Initiative

As we’ve discussed, PG&E’s Community Pipeline Safety Initiative program involves checking the area above natural gas transmission pipelines to help improve emergency access and prevent damage to the pipeline. This program is part of important changes the company has made over the past several years to improve the safety and reliability of our natural gas system. Trees, bushes and structures located too close to the gas pipeline can threaten safety because they can delay safety crews from getting to the pipeline in an emergency or for critical maintenance work.

PG&E has been working with customers and community leaders to share what we know about the safety risks and, together, develop plans that ensure items located too close to the pipeline are moved a safe distance away and the area is restored. In addition to Santa Cruz County, this safety work is taking place in communities across our service area, including in the Bay Area and East Bay, where we have reached successful agreements with local jurisdictions and private property owners to complete this work in a manner that respects their needs while protecting public safety.

Working Together with the County and the Local Community

Since January of this year, we have met with each County supervisor and held regular meetings with County staff to share detailed information and gather input. As part of PG&E's commitment to working collaboratively with our communities, we have also met with local community groups such as Save Our Shores, the United Way of Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Business Council and the Valley Women's Club of San Lorenzo Valley. In addition, we have hosted two open houses in Live Oak and near Graham Hill Road with the support of Supervisor Leopold and Supervisor McPherson. Both open houses were well attended and provided an opportunity for residents to speak directly with PG&E experts and have their questions answered. We have also engaged with local media to be sure the broader community is aware of the proposed work and why it is so important to community safety. We will continue to meet with the County, private property owners and other local residents to gather feedback, answer questions and address any concerns as we work together to plan for this work.

Guidance for this Safety Work

The Community Pipeline Safety Initiative, like all of PG&E's gas safety work, is under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). We have a responsibility to provide safe and reliable gas service to our customers, and to address any potential risk that could threaten the safety of the gas pipeline and the local community.

The standards we are using to conduct this work are based on guidance from state and federal regulators, pipeline safety organizations, industry associations and other pipeline operators regarding safe uses near natural gas transmission pipelines. These entities all agree on the importance of keeping the area from a minimum of 10 and up to 25 feet from the pipeline safe and clear. The US Department of Transportation's Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA), for example, advises that structures and trees should not be located in close proximity to gas pipelines because they can interfere with access for critical maintenance work. More information can be found in the publicly available PIPA report.¹

While access to the pipeline and keeping the area clear is the primary reason for our gas safety work, we've also commissioned tree studies in the past to look at how trees could interfere with our pipes underground. At approximately 75% of the 53 sites examined in the study with Dynamic Risk Assessment Systems, Inc., and in 90% of sites with trees within five feet of the pipeline, tree roots were found to have caused damage to the pipe's external coating. A copy of the tree study PG&E commissioned to better understand the impact tree roots may have on gas pipelines can be found on the California Department of Water Resources website.² While we take this information into account, the number one reason for our program is to provide unimpeded access to firefighters, our crews and any agency that would need immediate access to the lines during an emergency or for critical pipeline repair work.

Tree-by-Tree Review and Proposed Work in Santa Cruz County

Based on third-party guidance and best practice, as well as feedback we have received from our local communities, the Community Pipeline Safety program involves an in-depth review of all trees located within 14 feet of a gas transmission pipeline to determine if the tree needs to be replaced for safety reasons, or if it can potentially remain in place with ongoing monitoring. The tree-by-tree review

¹ Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance, *Partnering to Further Enhance Pipeline Safety in Communities Through Risk-Informed Land Use Planning, Final Report of Recommended Practices*, <http://www.ingaa.org/file.aspx?id=11683>

² Pacific Gas and Electric Company, *Tree Root Interference Study*, http://www.water.ca.gov/regulations/docs/082614/PGE_TreeRootStudyReport.pdf

includes analyzing important site-specific data, such as the tree species, its distance from the pipe, the depth of cover above the pipeline, and the tree's expected size at maturity. The results are analyzed by a team of pipeline safety experts and certified arborists to determine if the tree can remain in place with monitoring or if it needs to be replaced away from the pipe.

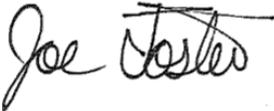
In addition to the trees located on public and County-owned property that we are working with the County to review, we are in the process of meeting with individual private property owners to review trees and any other items on their property that are located in close proximity to the gas pipeline to determine if they can remain in place or need to be moved away from the pipe. Together, we are developing plans for the gas safety work, which may include planting a new tree at a safe distance from the pipe and other landscape restoration that meets their needs for their property.

Minimizing Environmental Impacts

PG&E is committed to preserving and protecting the environment in all that we do. The company relies on one of the largest teams of environmental professionals in the nation to help minimize impacts on vegetation, trees and wildlife habitat. As part of this program, every project is individually reviewed by a team made up of biology, cultural and environmental field specialists prior to any work taking place. Our review includes field visits as well as a search and analysis of aerial and topographic imagery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service critical habitat designations and its Information Planning and Conservation planning tool (IPaC), the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), the California Native Plant Society rare plant database, and various cultural resources inventory databases. In addition, we are very mindful of the nesting bird season from mid-February to August. During this time, the team performs bird surveys for all projects, and will postpone work if an active nest is identified.

Thank you again for the opportunity to continue the dialogue around this critical gas safety work in Santa Cruz County. If there is any additional information we can provide at this time, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Joe Foster
Public Affairs Representative
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Office: 831-710-7648
Email: joe.foster@pge.com