

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: April 22, 2021

To: Placerville City Council

From: Mark Acuna
Community Utility Liaison

Subject: PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoff Report 04/27/2021

Introduction

We are entering the 4th season of PG&E PSPS outages in Placerville. We have worked with PG&E each year to reduce or eliminate the impacts to our community. The Gen Set and creation of a Micro Grid powering some critical facilities and business districts has prevented a complete blackout during fall wind events. The grid now includes most of Broadway, Upper and Lower Main Street and the Marshall Hospital area. PG&E's electrical system was not designed with fire danger zones in mind. This has resulted in some odd areas having power or being left dark. A prime example of their old system design is the south side of Main Street being dark. Thanks to work to protect Marshall Hospital, neighboring residential areas are now connected to the micro grid and remain on. The ongoing community impacts and frustrations are regularly shared with PG&E.

The City Manager and I met with several PG&E subject matter experts on April 13th to seek information and relief from PSPS outages this year. The information below outlines highlights and concerns noted for the 2021 PSPS outage season. It becomes clearer with each passing year, PG&E's challenges are numerous, and will carry on for the foreseeable future.

Transmission Outages: Most forecast wind events trigger PG&E's need to shut down portions of the 115kv line feeding El Dorado County. This main feeder supplies 6 substations, including Placerville. When the transmission line is de-energized the Gen Set must come online. On April 13th, we learned the eastern portion of this line runs into an Extreme Fire Hazard Zone near Pollock Pines. This portion of line is the reason for the numerous 2019 and 2020 transmission line outages.

Transmission Hardening: A new set of automatic transmission switches are planned for the Placerville Substation on Broadway in 2022. These switches will reduce or eliminate the need for transmission outages in Placerville. They will also impact the use of the Gen Set and the associated outages with the micro grid. Manual transmission switches currently exist at all substations. When asked about utilizing these switches to reduce our outages, PG&E showed clear reluctance to staff these switches, choosing to rely on the Gen Set and one existing automatic switch located in

Diamond Springs. Further discussion is planned regarding the existing switches. Loss of the transmission line to Placerville has lengthened past PSPS outages. With PG&E's compartmentalized operations, outages have extended waiting for a regional Transmission Inspector to clear our line. It should also be noted the cost to staff and operate the gen set is significant: Start up and operation monitoring staff, fuel, maintenance, substation connections, CARB permitting, lease payments, etc.

Distribution Hardening

PG&E staff has listened and developed a 2021 list of PSPS projects to reduce the impacts to our business districts. They include the following:

Automatic switching equipment is currently being installed at several locations to reduce the outage time when the Micro Grid is operated. This will be helpful but may speak to PG&E's need to operate a micro grid economically for years to come.

Broadway: Hangtown Village Square is currently fed from an overhead line, located in a fire hazard zone, on Baco Drive. PG&E plans to complete an underground connection from the Broadway micro grid to the shopping center's existing facilities this summer. (During past PSPS outages, the majority of these businesses have been dark.)

Eskaton Village, Blairs Lane: Given this neighborhood's proximity to the Broadway Substation and existing underground utilities, PG&E was requested to explore a micro grid connection. The project is scheduled for design and construction in 2022. The Eskaton Village has offered to site a Community Resource Center at their club house.

Placerville Pines and Western Slope Care Facilities: PG&E is currently installing new switches and connection points to connect these two critical care facilities to the micro grid. They are located in the Cedar Ravine, Marshall Way and Washington Street area. Like other micro grid connection projects, some adjoining commercial and residential customers will also benefit.

South Side of Main Street: PG&E is currently reviewing project options and designs to connect these numerous businesses to the micro grid. They expressed frustration with the challenges given the nature of the district and topographical challenges. This project is planned for 2022.

Distribution Outages

During our April 13th meeting a number of concerns were identified related to the fire hazard zones and PG&E's current electrical system or circuits. During 2020 PSPS outages, parts of Placerville Drive, Ray Lawyer and Forni Road were found off, while areas in the Weber Creek Canyon and Missouri Flat Area remained in service. This is another example of electrical circuits never designed to conform with fire safety zones. It is our belief a number of these "discrepancies" can be corrected at a low cost to PG&E. Additional discussions need to be scheduled with PG&E subject matter experts. When revised, facilities such as the Fairgrounds, Government Center, Library, Court facilities and many critical retail operations should see reduced or eliminated PSPS outage impacts.

Weather and No Wind Events

We continue to press PG&E for improved weather forecasting and localized meteorological staffing. The weather data collected by the City and El Dorado County Fire District was offered again, along with the promise to continue our local efforts to collect real time north wind data. PG&E is reluctant to explore the historical data on north wind events in our region. Recent discussions indicate their desire to continue to use a very wide brush. We again pressed them to place their meteorologist staff in the field to begin learning the Sierra foothill regions and reduce the need for No Wind events.

With a second year of low rainfall combined with numerous north wind events this winter and spring we should expect PSPS events to begin early. Numerous wildfire related metrics are at or beyond record levels. The discussion goes again to helping PG&E determine realistic fire zones for Placerville. Their current process literally cuts streets in half. How can an oak tree just inside a risk zone know it must burn hotter and faster than its neighbor tree just feet away? However, the impact to that neighborhood or business located on the same street are serious during a PSPS outage.

Scenic Highway Corridor and Permitting

During recent field inspections several locations were found where PG&E is in violation of the Scenic Highway Corridor Regulation. New or enlarged overhead poles and equipment have been placed without obtaining CPUC, Caltrans or City approval or exemptions. The City Engineering Department has complete details on the correct procedure to seek an exemption from its two year endeavor to obtain an exemption for the Mosquito Park and Ride project.

Project Permitting: There is a growing concern with PG&E's failure to apply for and follow the City's encroachment permitting process. Engineering Staff has worked hard to issue permits in a timely manner and be available to assist PG&E contractors so they can safely work on Placerville streets. Too frequently their effort has been met with less than professional behavior. During a meeting with City Engineer, Rebecca Neves, it became clear basic industry standards of communication and courtesy were not present.

Summary

It has been my goal to work with PG&E to find equitable solutions while reducing needless impacts to Placerville. Powerline safety and public safety will always be the first priority. The current PG&E employees tasked with addressing the PSPS issue are working hard. Sarah Rasheed and her colleagues have been professional and approachable. I welcome the chance to continue working with these PG&E'ers to make their system safe and reliable again. They have inherited a herculean task, not of their making.

I also have a duty to inform, assist and protect Placerville. We need to prepare for PSPS outages into our foreseeable future. The decades of deferred maintenance at PG&E are visible everywhere. Accountability is essential while attempting to reduce the impacts from this unimaginable time in utility history.