

# United States Senate

June 15, 2021

Patricia K. Poppe  
Chief Executive Officer  
Pacific Gas and Electric Corporation  
77 Beale Street, 32<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, California 94105

Dear Ms. Poppe,

We write today requesting information on how Pacific Gas and Electric is preparing for what may be an even more devastating fire year than we experienced in 2020. While we appreciate the efforts utilities across the state have taken to reduce wildfire risk, and note the ongoing efforts to reduce the size, frequency, and duration of Public Safety Power Shutoffs, we believe more must be done to provide reliable power and reduce the impact to California residents when power shutoffs are required to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Last year was another record-setting wildfire year for California. Our state saw more than 4 million acres burn, destroying more than 10,000 structures, of which 5,404 were homes. With a drought emergency now occurring or active in 41 of 58 California counties and across much of the West, we know resources will be stretched and that Public Safety Power Shutoffs are likely to be required to mitigate the risk of utility lines or other equipment sparking wildfires.

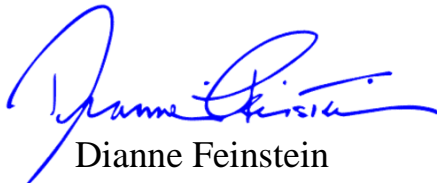
We are also concerned about the possibility of blackouts similar to what we experienced in August 2020. Last year, 800,000 California residents experienced power outages because of extreme heat and the failure to ensure adequate electricity supply. According to the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's 2021 Summer Reliability Assessment, there remains a significant shortfall at peak demand, estimated at 10,185 MWh.

While we are encouraged by resource additions, including 825 MW of new battery storage by August 1, 2021, communication with the public about when and where power outages will occur is of paramount importance. We urge you to


ensure that blackouts are not required due to a lack of planning, especially given the drought impacts upon hydropower generation.

We support the efforts your company has outlined in the Wildfire Mitigation Plan filed with the California Public Utilities Commission, specifically that you have prioritized reducing the impact of Public Safety Power Shutoff events. As we look to mitigate the risk of fire and impact of power shutoffs going forward, we respectfully request that you provide responses to the questions in this letter as soon as possible, but no later than June 30, 2021. Thank you for your work in advance of what is likely to be another challenging wildfire year.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

## **Attachment: Questions on Public Safety Power Shutoffs and Power Outages**

- What steps has Pacific Gas and Electric taken to ensure customers receive accurate and timely information regarding Public Safety Power Shutoff events, including impacted areas, location of relief centers, duration of shutoffs, and other critical information?
- How is Pacific Gas and Electric conducting outreach efforts to communities such as non-English speakers and areas that may have limited internet or cellular access?
- What steps has Pacific Gas and Electric taken to identify medical baseline customers and ensure electricity is available for those who rely on equipment for medical devices or refrigerated supplies?
- Has Pacific Gas and Electric taken additional actions to comply with the California Public Utilities Commission's updated guidelines regarding identifying customers "above and beyond" the medical baseline population who rely on electricity for medical purposes?
- How is Pacific Gas and Electric engaging with operators of critical facilities such as hospitals to minimize the effects of Public Safety Power Shutoff events?
- When Pacific Gas and Electric shuts off power pursuant to Sections 451 and 399.2 of the Public Utilities Code, what is your plan to partner with cities and counties to ensure they are communicated with effectively and work with them as partners during shutoffs?
- What actions is Pacific Gas and Electric taking to encourage customers to decrease use in the early evening hours when the risk of outages is high? How has Pacific Gas and Electric used demand response as a tool for changing consumption patterns in order to incentivize customers to shift energy demand to off-peak times?