Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding PG&E's Proposed 2028–2037 Undergrounding Plan — Montclair Hills

To the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety:
I am writing as a resident of Montclair Hills, Oakland, to express serious concern about PG&E's proposed 2028–2037 Electrical Undergrounding Plan and its implications for the safety of our community.

Montclair Hills faces extraordinary wildfire risks. Our heavily wooded and densely populated neighborhood has narrow, winding roads, very limited evacuation routes, and significant tree-fall hazards. The fire crew and thousands of residents depend on just a few roads to extinguish fires and reach safety during an emergency. A single downed utility pole or electrical line blocking a critical road could have catastrophic consequences for hundreds, potentially thousands, of people. It was a miracle that our neighborhood did not burn during the 1991 Firestorm and if it had, there certainly would have been more fatalities.

In a normal rainy season, our neighborhood at great risk due to the terrain and the treescape. With the forecast of a SuperNino, our neighbood risk has increased significantly since it is forecasted to exacerbate both severe canyon winds sweeping through Shepherd Canyon and very heavy rains saturating the ground and loosening older trees' root systems. , PG&E's hardening of overhead powerlines and automatic power shut-offs are not adequate to substantially reduce wildfire risk in our neighborhood in a normal season let alone the one that is coming up on our now. . The severe canyon wind will quickly turn a single spark of an overhead powerline into a firestorm. PG&E's plan should place significant weight of such seasonal phenomenon in its holistic evaluation for undergrounding
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PG&E's proposed plan represents a significant change in how undergrounding decisions are made. It gives greater weight to benefit-cost comparisons, even though PG&E acknowledges that important public-safety risks—including evacuation constraints and falling-tree hazards—are not fully captured by its quantitative risk models. The value of human life cannot be reduced to a financial calculation that fails to account for the full consequences of a catastrophic wildfire. This is especially critical for our area because Montclair has a limited number of streets that absorb all traffic out of the Montclair (e.g., Snake, Colton, Shepherd Canyon, Thornhill) that serve almost 2,000 housing units. Most troubling, PG&E acknowledges that important risks, including evacuation constraints and tree-fall hazards, are not fully captured by its quantitative models.

The problem is that PG&E's proposed plan now expressly permits PG&E to exclude undergrounding of electrical lines in areas with known public-safety risks, without clearly demonstrating that it has adequately assessed the cumulative consequences of all the vulnerabilities acting together.

In Montclair Hills, these vulnerabilities cannot be separated. Limited evacuation access, population exposure, high tree-fall risk, and overhead electrical infrastructure combine to create potentially catastrophic consequences during a wildfire. All these factors should be assessed cumulatively.
An additional concern is the interconnectedness of our entire neighborhood. Our very few evacuation roads depend on a network of smaller residential streets and connecting roads. A fallen pole or power line on one of these smaller roads could prevent hundreds of residents from even reaching a main evacuation route. PG&E must therefore evaluate the safety of the entire interconnected evacuation network—not simply individual roads—and consider comprehensive undergrounding throughout Montclair Hills.
Economic comparisons cannot reliably determine the safest mitigation when some of the most serious consequences to human life have not been adequately quantified.

I therefore urge the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety to require PG&E to evaluate and quantify the cumulative and compounding risks facing Montclair Hills and demonstrate how those risks influence its undergrounding priorities and decisions.

OEIS should not approve a methodology that allows economic comparisons to override the combined risks to human life when those risks have not been adequately evaluated.
The lives of our residents depend on decisions that fully recognize these dangers.

Respectfully,

Kristine and Russell Mechem
Montclair Hills, Oakland, California