

April 30, 2024

Mr. Patrick Doherty
Program Manager | Compliance Assurance Division
Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
715 P Street, 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Reference: Energy Safety-ID: NOV_PGE_CAC18_20231128_0934
Notice of Violation: Government Code § 15475.1 and the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 17 § 29302(b)(2)

Dear Mr. Patrick Doherty:

This letter is in response to the above referenced Notice of Violation (NOV) dated March 21, 2024, (NOV Letter) regarding the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety) inspection of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's 2023 WMP initiatives in the vicinity of the city of Willits, California.

Energy Safety based its compliance assessment on the following statute and code sections:

California Government Code Section 15475.2, "Notice of Defect or Violation" states in part:

"The office may issue a notice of defect or violation to direct the regulated entity to correct any defect or noncompliance with the approved wildfire mitigation plan or failure to comply with any laws, regulations, or guidelines within the authority of the office."

California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 29302(b)(2), "Investigations, Notices of Defect and Violation, and Referral to the Commission" states in part:

"The Director may designate a compliance officer to consider the findings of any investigation. The compliance officer may issue any of the following:

...

(2) Notice of violation, identifying noncompliance with an approved Wildfire Mitigation Plan or any law, regulation, or guideline within the authority of the Office."

The November 28, 2023 inspection performed by Energy Safety identified the following violations:

Violation 1. Energy Safety observed that in implementing 2023 WMP initiative number 8.2.3.1 - Pole Clearing, Pacific Gas and Electric Company failed to provide accurate data for an unnumbered pole at coordinates 39.390884356626955, -123.34761947739408. Energy Safety considers this violation for failure to provide accurate data to be in the Minor risk category.

Violation 2. Energy Safety observed that in implementing 2023 WMP initiative number 8.2.3.1 - Pole Clearing, Pacific Gas and Electric Company failed to adhere to a required protocol of pole clearing on pole number 121372843 at coordinates 39.414468934293, -123.361763449499. Energy Safety considers this violation for failure to adhere to protocol to be in the Minor risk category.

Violation 3. Energy Safety observed that in implementing 2023 WMP initiative number 8.2.3.1 - Pole Clearing, Pacific Gas and Electric Company failed to adhere to a required protocol of pole clearing at an unnumbered pole at coordinates 39.49699199735, -123.366467972922. Energy Safety considers this violation for failure to adhere to protocol to be in the Moderate risk category.

Response

We respectfully disagree with the above violations asserting that PG&E failed to adhere to the protocol outlined in its 2023 WMP Initiative 8.2.3.1 – Pole Clearing and that it did not provide accurate data associated with this Initiative. Initiative 8.2.3.1 describes PG&E’s “removal/clearing of vegetation around select Transmission and Distribution poles and towers in accordance with PRC Section 4292, to maintain a firebreak of at least 10 feet in radius (out from the pole) up to 8 ft up from the ground per Title 14 CCR 1254. These requirements apply in the SRA during designated fire season.”¹ In the three violations described below, we have complied with and continue to comply with Initiative 8.2.3.1. Our response and, if applicable, corrective actions and recommendations for each of the three alleged violations are noted below:

Violation 1

Energy Safety Findings: “...the [PG&E] provided location at 1650-1720 S Main St, Willits, CA, 95490, USA, 39.390884356627, -123.347619477394 ... found neither utility poles nor electrical equipment where pole clearing was reported as completed. Therefore, Energy Safety was unable to verify that Pacific Gas and Electric Company completed pole clearing work. The inspector’s observation was that there was a parking lot light pole at the location reported by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, with the nearest electrical pole located approximately 300 feet to the northeast.”

PG&E Response: While Energy Safety provided a latitude, longitude, and approximate address for the inspected location associated with Violation 1, none of these identifying features corresponds to a location provided to Energy Safety in PG&E’s Q2 2023 Spatial Quarterly Data Report (SQDR).

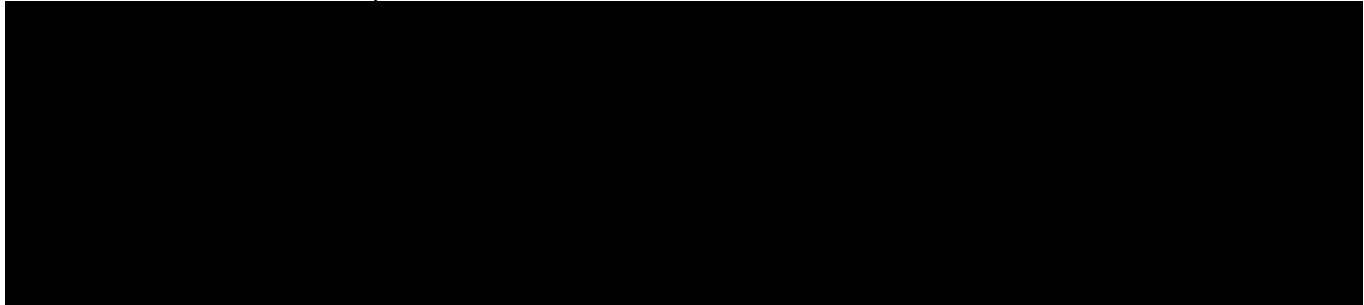
There *is* a pole located at the approximate address of 1650-1720 S Main Street in Willits (PG&E Pole #120418697), however we did not report that pole as “completed” in the Q2 2023 SQDR. Per PG&E’s 2023 WMP Initiative 8.2.3.1, PRC 4292 applies to State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) and United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 5, but we also maintain firebreaks at certain other areas based on

¹ PG&E’s 2023-2025 WMP R3 p. 679

local agreements or through PG&E guidance (e.g., risk reduction work). Per Vegetation Control (VC) Utility Standard TD-7112S, outside of SRAs and USFS-Federal Responsibility Areas (FRAs), and in the absence of agreements with specific entities or agencies or awareness that an area of other jurisdiction has adopted PRC 4292, we apply PRC 4292 clearing requirements, with exceptions, to additional areas as part of our risk reduction work, particularly in High Fire-Threat Districts (HFTDs) and High Fire Risk Areas (HFRA). Because PG&E Pole #120418697 is not located in an SRA, USFS-FRA, HFTD or HFRA, it is outside of the scope of our pole clearing commitments per Initiative 8.2.3.1 and standard TD-7112S.

In an attempt to infer the closest approximate location where we reported completed activities for Initiative 8.2.3.1 in the Q2 2023 SQDR, we reviewed records of poles in the proximity of the latitude, longitude and address provided by Energy Safety. PG&E VC Pole ID #L235141, located at 1635 S Main Street was reported as completed in the Q2 2023 SQDR. VC Pole ID #L235141 is located within an HFTD Tier 2 Local Responsibility Area (LRA), as noted in the “Fire Area” field of the VC Pole Inspection Record below and the assigned VC Pole number starting with an “L”. We inspected and properly cleared the subject location on 04/27/2023 and 05/15/23 per the protocol described in Initiative 8.2.3.1 and standard TD-7112S. As noted in the BMP Clear Type field below, we listed this work as “Clr-ChmTrt,” indicating that this location is mechanically cleared and treated with herbicide.

REFERENCE: VC Pole Inspection Record



Energy Safety Findings, cont’d: Additionally, Energy Safety concluded that Violation 1 is Minor, based on a series of facts. We respond to these facts, as follows:

1. *The reported location provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company where pole clearing was reported as completed was a parking lot light post and not an electrical pole or equipment.*

The address and Latitude/Longitude provided in the NOV does not correspond with any locations we reported as completed in the Q2 2023 SQDR we provided to Energy Safety for Initiative 8.2.3.1 – Pole Clearing. We thus cannot speak to whether the location inspected by Energy Safety was an electrical pole or equipment. We welcome continued discussions with Energy Safety to ensure we respond accordingly to this violation.

2. *The nearest electrical pole that showed indications of pole clearing was approximately 300 feet to the northeast.*

All poles located within 300’ of the address and latitude/longitude provided are located within an LRA and are not located within either HFTDs or HFRA, making them outside of the scope of our pole clearing commitments per Initiative 8.2.3.1 and standard TD-7112S.

Violation 2

Energy Safety Findings: “On pole number 121372843 at 127 Mill Creek Dr, Willits, CA, 95490, USA, 39.414468934293, - 123.361763449499, the inspector observed that pole clearing was not completed per protocol. The inspector’s observation is documented in Violation 2 photographs, which are attachments to this report. Photo numbers...depict a non-exempt 3-foot tall, irrigated landscaping within the 10 ft firebreak radius.

PG&E’s Response: We inspected the subject location per the protocol described in PG&E’s 2023 WMP Initiative 8.2.3.1. Per Initiative 8.2.3.1, PRC 4292 applies to SRAs and USFS Region 5, but we also maintain firebreaks at certain other areas based on local agreements or through PG&E guidance (e.g., risk reduction work). Per standard TD-7112S, outside of SRAs and USFS-FRAs, and in the absence of agreements with specific entities or agencies or awareness that an area of other jurisdiction has adopted PRC 4292, we apply PRC 4292 clearing requirements, with exceptions, to additional areas as part of our risk reduction work, particularly in HFTDs and HFRA’s.

PG&E Pole #121372843 (VC Pole #L235125) is located within an HFTD Tier 2 LRA, as noted in the “Fire Area” field of the VC Pole Inspection Record below and the assigned VC Pole Number starting with an “L”. The pole itself has solid blade disconnects installed, as indicated on the “Non-Exempt Equipment” field with “SB,” as well as in the “Comment” field with “SBIN ICA NO CLRING REQUIRED...” Pursuant to PG&E Standard TD-7112S, Section 7 “Expectations for Distribution Poles in LRAs,” Subsection 4, solid blade disconnects within LRAs are considered low risk and are an exception to our application of PRC 4292 pole clearing requirements within HFTDs. However, we did correctly inspect and inventory the subject pole in the VC database on 6/5/2023, consistent with standard TD-7112S, Section 7.1, and consistent with the commitments made under WMP Initiative 8.2.3.1. We will continue to monitor and re-inspect the subject pole to assess for future potential risk mitigation.

REFERENCE: VC Pole Inspection Record

Address: 129 Mill Creek Dr.		City: Willits	Lat: 39.414456	Long: -123.36177	Rating: L	Fire Area: LRA	Area: 0	Thomas Guide: 20	MBZ: CAH	Inspector: CAH	Insp Date Time: 4/5/2023 12:38:23 PM
BMP Clear Type: Full Landscape	Circuit: WILLITS 1102 (0042661102)	SSD Rte #: 1000	Routing #: 35	SSD #: 3957	Chem Perm: No	Work Status: Insp No Wik	Non-Exempt Equipment: SB	Trans Line Name:	Tx #:	Pole #: L235125	
BMP Sub Type: NONE	Document #: XX999999	Owner: Private	How Notified: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person, <input type="checkbox"/> Door, <input type="checkbox"/> Permit			Notification: Inventory	Alerts: - No Alerts. -				
Directions: P.AT.ADD											
Comment: SBIN ICA NO CLRING REQUIRED RATED LOW RISK ON VC FIRE RISK MATRIX IN RR NO CLEARING REQUIRED											
Customer Name:		Phone:	@ Loc: No								
Work Request: HBNC0000026W	Date Completed: 6/5/2023	VC Clear Type: J	WC Status: Insp No Wik	Completed By: MLJ	Herbicide Applied:						

Energy Safety Findings, cont’d: Additionally, Energy Safety concluded that Violation 2 is Minor, based on a series of facts. We respond to these facts, as follows:

1. *The Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s WMP clearance work was identified as complete at this location.*

We include in the scope of our “completed” pole clearing activities subject poles which are inspected but which may not have required any work. This is generally indicated in our records with a WC Status of “Insp No Work,” as shown in the VC Pole Inspection Record above. VC Pole #L235125 was inspected on 6/5/2023. However, the only equipment on the pole – solid blade disconnects – are exceptions to our practice of working LRA poles in HFTDs the same as

SRA poles (see TD-7112S Section 7.4, first bullet). As such, the inspector noted this exception in both the “Non-exempt equipment” and “Comment” fields of the VC Pole Inspection Record, inspected the pole pursuant to PG&E Standard TD-7112S, Section 7.1, and marked the site as “Insp NoWrk”. This site was thus deemed “completed” for the purposes of the VC program.

2. *A vegetation exemption does not exist at this location.*

As described above, poles in LRAs with solid blade disconnects are exceptions to our practice of working LRA poles in HFTDs the same as SRA poles (see TD-7112S Section 7.4, first bullet). As part of our GO 165 periodic inspections and standard TD-7112S, we will continue to inspect the pole and if the equipment type changes, the pole may be brought within the scope of PRC 4292 work.

3. *The location of the pole is in a residential community next to a pedestrian sidewalk and street.*

4. *The vegetation is maintained by the owner.*

5. *The vegetation density is minimal.*

We agree with these statements (3) – (5).

Violation 3

Energy Safety Findings: *“On an unnumbered pole at 29501 N Highway 101, Willits, CA, 95490, USA, 39.49699199735, - 123.366467972922, the inspector observed that pole clearing was not performed. The inspector’s observation is documented in Violation 3 photographs, which are attachments to this report...depict live vegetation and dead brush within the 10 ft firebreak radius.”*

PG&E’s Response. We performed an analysis of the location data in the NOV and identified several poles adjacent to the latitude, longitude, and address. Due to the number of poles in the area, we were unable to confirm the location of Energy Safety’s inspection. In an attempt to infer the closest approximate location where we reported completed activities for Initiative 8.2.3.1 in the Q2 2023 SQDR, we reviewed records of poles in the proximity of the provided latitude, longitude and address of 29501 N Highway 101. We identified PG&E Pole #120850353 (SAP Equipment ID #103963602), VC Pole #185826 and confirm we inspected and properly cleared the location on 4/18/2023 and 5/12/2023, per the protocol described in Initiative 8.2.3.1 and standard TD-7112S. As noted in the BMP Clear Type field in the VC Pole Inspection Record below, we listed this work as “Clr-ChmTrt,” indicating that this location is mechanically cleared and treated with herbicide.

REFERENCE: VC Pole Inspection Record



Also, we reviewed the photographic evidence provided with Energy Safety’s Findings (Item14GImg1 & Item13Img2) indicating a Source Side Device (SSD) number of “65561”. We performed a field review of asset SSD “65561” and identified equipment types, including fault tamer fuses, compression connectors and wedge connectors, which are exempt from VC pole clearing pursuant to Title 14 CCR 1255 and as outlined in California Power Line Fire Prevention Field Guide Table 2 (p.25-26).² Please see photos below of the asset with exempt equipment taken during the field review on 3/22/2024:

REFERENCE: Photos of pole with exempt equipment



Energy Safety Findings, cont’d: Additionally, Energy Safety concluded that Violation 3 is Moderate, based on a series of facts. We respond to these facts, as follows:

1. *The Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s WMP clearance work was identified as complete at this location.*
2. *There is no evidence at the location indicating that pole brushing occurred.*
3. *Flammable vegetation was present within the 10 ft firebreak radius.*
4. *The vegetation density is moderate and is in contact with the pole.*

Please see our response to Violation 3 above.

Opportunities to Improve Reporting

Energy Safety’s Data Guidelines provide specific templates and data requirements that electrical corporations must adhere to. Our data is structured in our source systems to support daily operations. However, when transforming our data to fit into Energy Safety’s standardized compliance templates,

² [California Power Line Fire Prevention Field Guide](#)

misinterpretation of critical information may result. To assist with Energy Safety’s inspections, we will look to enhance the optional ‘Description of Work’ field with additional information that will help indicate where inspections took place, but clearance work was not required. This both aligns with our stated Pole Clearing WMP commitment that we will inspect and perform work that is necessary, while also supporting Energy Safety in recognizing where a “Complete” status within the data indicates inspection only work deemed unnecessary to clear. Likewise, not all clearance work is completed during the time that the inspection is completed. Rather, the inspection is completed, and that inspection then indicates where clearance work needs, or doesn’t need, to be completed later.

Additionally, our pole clearing project is organized by a unique job number or project ID (identified under column “VmpID” of our Initiative Vegetation Management Project Point Feature Class) in the data leveraged by Energy Safety to conduct their field verifications. As such, we request that Energy Safety please reference the project ID in future correspondence. This will assist us in identifying the site inspected by Energy Safety and referenced within the NOV recommendation.

We remain committed to and welcome continued discussions with Energy Safety to ensure we are providing the information required for successful field verifications.

Please contact me at vincent.tanguay@pge.com if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Vincent Tanguay,
Sr. Director, Regulatory Compliance and Quality Assurance

cc: Patrick Doherty, Program Manager, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
Elizabeth McAlpine, Program and Project Supervisor, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
Edward Chavez, Program and Project Supervisor, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
Wade Greenacre, Regulatory Relations, PG&E
Jerrod Meier, Regulatory Compliance, PG&E
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