



State looks to “microgrids” to solve power blackouts

- *CPUC issues proposal for the deployment of microgrids*
- *“Microgrids using independent energy supply can provide essential backup”*

Microgrids could be the answer to wildfire-caused widespread power outages and the so-called “Public Safety Power Shut-off” events, the California Public Utilities Commission says.

It has issued for public comment a proposal that would require large electric investor-owned utilities to accelerate deployment of microgrids. The proposal will be on the CPUC’s June 11 meeting agenda for a vote.

The proposal orders the state’s investor-owned utilities to prioritize, streamline, and expedite microgrids and resiliency projects that could be put in place by September 1, and requires collaboration with local and tribal governments.

The projects could keep electricity on for critical facilities and other customers during power outages.

“Wildfire season will begin soon and, if like last year, it will surge this fall, bringing Public Safety Power Shut-offs and other outages” says CPUC Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma. “Microgrids using independent energy supply can provide essential backup and resiliency for communities affected”

The proposal specifically requires utilities to:

- Further standardize application processes for project approvals;
- Expedite utility sign-off on installed projects;
- Accelerate interconnection of projects for key locations, customers, and facilities;
- Adjust rates to better value resiliency; and,
- Enhance collaboration and coordination with local and tribal governments.

The proposal intends to give communities with a strong interest in microgrids and resiliency projects better access to the technical resources and support from utilities, the CPUC says.

Additionally, it conditionally approves several resiliency proposals from two utilities.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company would implement programs that would:

- o Upgrade substations that can be quickly and safely energized with local sources of power;
- o Procure temporary, portable generators for use at substations and other key locations of public benefit for the 2020 wildfire season; and,
- o Provide utility technical and financial support for community-proposed microgrids to enhance resiliency of critical facilities and vulnerable customers.

San Diego Gas & Electric would implement software and hardware technology to enhance microgrid operation, as well as augment and interoperate with SDG&E's existing advanced distribution management system and microgrid projects proposed in other proceedings.