

March 16, 2001

**Advice 2302-G/2088-E**

(Pacific Gas and Electric Company ID U 39 M)

Public Utilities Commission of the State of California

**Subject:** Modification of Customer Application Forms for California Alternate Rates for Energy Program

In compliance with Ordering Paragraph 6 of Commission Decision (D.) 00-09-036, issued on September 7, 2000, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) hereby submits for filing, proposed revisions to its customer application form for the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program.

**Purpose**

This advice filing submits proposed revisions to gas and electric Form No. 01-9077 – *CARE Program for Separately Metered Residential Customers*, to reflect a number of changes in the types and categories of information requested on customer application forms for the CARE program.

Form No. 01-9077, will be revised in a separate advice filing to reflect the income levels for 2001, as part of the annual revision to household income requirements for CARE programs. This annual revision is made in compliance with Resolution E-3524, dated February 19, 1998, in which the Commission ordered the Energy Division Director to notify California utilities by letter each May 1<sup>st</sup> of annual revisions to CARE income levels effective June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Background**

In Ordering Paragraph 6 of D.00-09-036, the Commission directed Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Gas Company, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas & Electric Company (collectively, the Utilities) to develop CARE application forms that contain the same types and categories of information for all customers applying for the CARE program. The Utilities were directed to jointly develop such forms with public input and advice-file them by March 1, 2001. On February 28, 2001, the filing date was extended to March 16, 2001, by the Commission's Executive Director.

The Utilities held two public forums to provide interested parties a venue to comment and offer suggestions about the information shown on their respective

CARE applications. The first public input meeting was held on February 13, 2001, in Downey, California, and the second on February 14, 2001, in San Francisco, California. These meetings were scheduled to facilitate attendance by locating one meeting in southern California and the other in northern California. Toll-free call in numbers were provided for interested parties who were unable to travel to the meeting sites. The list of participants is provided in Attachment A, attached hereto.

The Utilities' respective CARE applications, while different in format, have generally asked the same information of applicants. Differences in application formats occurred due to differing business constraints of each utility and the fact that the Utilities have not been asked to achieve more uniformity in their application forms in the past. For example, two of the utilities are required to enclose a CARE application in the billing envelope annually. This requirement constrains the size and format of the application.

## **PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

At the two public input meetings, public attendees, Commission representatives, and utility representatives offered a variety of suggestions aimed at improving the CARE application forms. Some comments and suggestions were diametrically opposed to others. In some cases, substantial discussion helped parties reach a consensus on issues. For some issues, however, it was not possible to reach resolution at this time and/or the issue did not concern the types and categories of information on the application forms. Attachment B contains a short description of all public comments and subsequent discussions from the two public input meetings. This attachment also lists items that the Utilities were able to incorporate into their CARE applications at this time, as well as those suggestions that will be kept for analysis and possible implementation in the future.

## **CONSENSUS ISSUES**

In considering the public input and comments, the Utilities determined that the following types and categories of information requested are appropriate for immediate standardization on their respective CARE applications:

- Personal Information: Each utility's CARE application form will request the following customer information:<sup>1</sup>
  - Customer Name
  - Service address

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<sup>1</sup> When utilities are capable of providing a pre-printed (computer-generated) application, the Customer Name, Service Address, and Account Number are already provided on the CARE application. Because not every utility has these capabilities and it would be extremely expensive to add this functionality, the Utilities agreed that this capability should not be standardized, especially given that it does not affect the types and categories of information required on the form.

- Utility Account Number
  - Telephone Number (with the option of requesting “home” and “work” numbers)
  - Total annual household income
  - Number of persons in household, broken down by the categories of “Adults,” “Children,” and “Total.”
- Types and Sources of Income: A list of the types and sources of income that applicants can use to calculate their annual income to determine their eligibility for CARE will be included on each utility’s CARE application in the following order and format:
    - Wages or Salaries
    - Interest or Dividends from:
      - Savings Accounts,
      - Stocks or Bonds, or
      - Retirement Accounts
    - Unemployment Benefits
    - Rental or Royalty Income
    - Scholarships, Grants, or Other Aid Used for Living Expenses
    - Profit from Self-Employment (IRS Form 1040, Schedule C, line 29)
    - Disability Payments
    - Workers Compensation
    - Social Security, SSI, SSP
    - Pensions
    - Insurance Settlements
    - Legal Settlements
    - TANF (AFDC)
    - Food Stamps
    - Child Support
    - Cash and/or Other Income
    - Spousal Support
  - Income Qualifications: Each utility will list the income qualifications per household size in a table with the following format:<sup>2</sup>

MAXIMUM HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
Number of Persons In Household	Total Combined Annual Income
1 or 2	\$XX,XXX
3	\$XX,XXX
4	\$XX,XXX
5	\$XX,XXX
Add \$X,XXX for each additional person.	

- Declaration and self-certification statement: Each utility’s CARE application form will contain a customer declaration and self-certification statement of eligibility and signature block that will be printed in the following manner:

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to Resolution E-3524, the CARE income qualification guidelines are updated annually. The new income guidelines for 2001 have not yet been received by the Utilities from the Commission’s Energy Division. The Utilities propose to insert those figures into the standardized Maximum Household Income table once they are available.

*"I state that the information I have provided in this application is true and correct. I agree to provide proof of income, if asked. I agree to inform [name of utility] if I no longer qualify to receive the discount. I understand that if I receive the discount without qualifying for it, I may be required to pay back the discount I received. I understand that [name of utility] can share my information with other utilities or their agents to enroll me in their assistance programs."*

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*Customer Signature*

*Date*

- Other Assistance Information: Each utility's CARE application will include a section regarding other low-income assistance program information that will read as follows:

***"OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR:***

*LIHEAP – Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Provides bill payment assistance, emergency bill assistance and weatherization services. Call the Department of Community Services and Development at 1-800-433-4327 for more information."*

Each utility will have the discretion to list other utility services for which customers may be eligible below this statement. This flexibility allows each utility to list the appropriate services available to its customers.

**SPECIFIC MODIFICATIONS TO PG&E's CARE APPLICATION FORM**

PG&E proposes to make the following specific changes to its CARE application, Form No. 01-9077, in order to conform to the consensus issues discussed above. PG&E's proposed changes, as reflected in Attachment C attached hereto, are as follows:

- **Customer Account Number**: An additional box was added to accommodate an eleventh character that commonly shows on customer bill statements.
- **Income Qualifications**: PG&E revised the headings and reformatted the table to provide information on income for a five-member household.
- **Household Income Worksheet**: The order of, and description for the possible sources of income was rearranged to comply with the standardized format.
- **Declaration**: The language of this statement was modified in order to comply with the standardized format agreed upon by the joint utilities.

***Additional modifications:***

PG&E has found that use of a standard 8 ½ x 11 inch format for our CARE forms allows additional space to include additional information that customers applying for CARE program may find useful. While use of this format affords the use of multiple languages on each application as well as valuable information to our low-income customers, it does preclude PG&E from including this application form as part of our billing statement, or within our billing envelope.

A second tear-off sheet that may be retained for reference by the applicant is included with each application. A number of minor changes have been made to this secondary page.

- **Instructions:** An additional note that incomplete applications will delay processing was added to line 3.
- **CARE Program Rules:** Aside from the title of this section, language in this area was “softened” to match the tone of the revised application designed by the Joint Utilities.
- **Other Programs and Services You May Qualify For:** PG&E included the revised contact information for LIHEAP and additionally added a new line for information on the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service (ULTS). The intent of this addition is to draw attention to cross-utility programs from which customers qualifying for CARE may benefit and possibly leverage ULTS enrollment goals for the telecommunications utilities.

***Other forms:***

PG&E also provides separate forms for enrollment in the Sub-Metered Tenant CARE program that closely mirrors the application form provided in this filing. PG&E will be modifying forms for that program to match the agreed upon changes that the Joint Utilities have derived in this process. These forms will be included in our May 1, 2001, advice filing.

**Effective Date**

This advice filing is made in compliance with Commission directives in D.00-09-036. PG&E respectfully requests that this filing be approved and become effective on April 1, 2001, or as soon thereafter as possible in order to allow the Utilities to successfully implement changes to their respective CARE application forms by the proposed June 1 implementation date. To meet this schedule, PG&E requests that the Commission expedite its review of this filing and shorten the protest period from twenty (20) days to ten (10) days pursuant to General Order 96-A.

No cost information is required for this advice filing.

This advice filing will not increase any rate or charge, cause the withdrawal of

service, or conflict with any other schedule or rule.

### **Protests**

Anyone wishing to protest this filing may do so by sending a letter within 10 days of the date of this filing, provided PG&E's request for expedited treatment is granted. The protest must state the grounds upon which it is based, including such items as financial and service impact, and should be submitted expeditiously. Protests should be sent by U.S. mail and via facsimile to:

IMC Branch Chief  
Energy Division  
California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Avenue, Room 4002  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Facsimile: (415) 703-2200

Copies should also be mailed to the attention of the Director, Energy Division, Room 4005 and Jerry Royer, at the address shown above. It is also requested that a copy of the protest be sent via postal mail and facsimile to Pacific Gas and Electric Company on the same date it is mailed or delivered to the Commission (at the address shown below).

Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
Attn: Les Guliasi  
Director, Regulatory Relations  
77 Beale Street, Mailcode B10C  
P.O. Box 770000  
San Francisco, CA 94177  
Facsimile: (415) 973-7226

### **Notice**

In accordance with Section III, Paragraph G, of General Order 96-A, a copy of this advice letter is being sent electronically and via U.S. mail to parties shown on the attached list. Address changes should be directed to Nelia Avendano at (415) 973-3529.

No cost information is required for this advice filing. This advice filing will not increase any rate or charge, cause the withdrawal of service, or conflict with any other schedule or rule.

Vice President - Regulatory Relations

Attachments