

July 30, 2001

Advice 2331-G/2145-E

(Pacific Gas and Electric Company ID U 39 M)

Public Utilities Commission of the State of California

Subject: Quarterly CARE Bill Notice and Outgoing Telephone Message

Purpose

The purpose of this advice filing is to comply with Ruling Paragraph 3 of the June 15, 2001, Administrative Law Judge's (ALJ) Ruling on Filing Procedures to Implement Assembly Bill (AB) X1 3. AB X1 3 adds new Section 739.4 to the Public Utilities Code that, among other things, requires utilities to provide additional information to facilitate better penetration rates for the California Alternate Rate for Energy (CARE) program and to protect low-income and senior households from unwarranted disconnection of necessary electric and gas services.

Background

Low-income assistance programs consist of rate assistance under the CARE program and direct weatherization and energy efficiency services under the Low-Income Energy Efficiency (LIEE) program. CARE provides a rate discount to eligible low-income customers in accordance with Section 739.1 of the Public Utilities Code. Ruling Paragraph 3 of the June 15, 2001, ALJ Ruling requires utilities to file advice letters by July 30, 2001, for approval of outgoing telephone messages and quarterly CARE bill notices required under new Section 739.4, Sections (b)(1) and (b)(4).

Section (b)(1) of Section 739.4 requires the utilities to: "Provide an outgoing message on all calls, where the customer is seeking to establish service or is put on hold, to customer service lines that briefly describes the CARE program in standard language approved by the commission, and that provides a toll-free phone number for customers to call to subscribe to the program or for further information."

Section (b)(4) of Section 739.4 requires the utilities to: "Provide information on customer bills, presented in a conspicuous manner on a front facing page, that indicates that a customer may be eligible for the CARE program. This notice shall be provided quarterly on customer bills."

Standardized Format

The ALJ Ruling requires that, pending review and approval by the Commission of this filing, the utilities should provide "interim" outgoing messages consistent with the direction of the statute. In addition, the utilities have been requested to meet and work to jointly develop a

standardized format for the outgoing telephone messages and quarterly bill notices prior to filing advice letter proposals.

PG&E participated in a July 16, 2001 conference call with Avista Utilities, Southern California Gas Company, Southern California Edison Company, San Diego Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Water Company, Sierra Pacific Power, and Southwest Gas to discuss a standardized format for CARE telephone messages and quarterly bill messages.

During the conference call it was agreed that the most feasible approach to standardized message formats would be to identify mandatory elements the messages should contain, rather than verbatim scripts or text. The rationale for this approach was based on existing Memorandums of Understanding or Commission mandates dictating certain message content, primarily arising from the electric rate stabilization proceedings.

The following consensus was reached regarding the minimum elements that all utilities would incorporate into their messages and the corresponding languages to be used, with the exception noted in the footnote:

Service Establishment and On-Hold Message Elements	Language s	Quarterly Bill Message Elements	Language s
<p>Messages must reference that a discount is available for enrolling in CARE.</p> <p>Customers must be given access to an 800 number and/or actual person to receive CARE information and application.</p> <p>Customers must be advised that there are income requirements for CARE program participation.</p>	<p>English Spanish¹</p>	<p>Message on bill must be conspicuous (either through the use of fonts and/or graphics) and appear on a front facing page of the billing statement.</p> <p>Customers must be advised that they "may be eligible" for the CARE program and/or discount.</p> <p>Reference must be made regarding how customers can get more CARE information and/or application.</p>	<p>English Spanish</p>

Outgoing Voice Message

In accordance with Section (b)(1) of Section 739.4, PG&E proposes the following text for the outgoing voice message:

"The California Alternate Rates for Energy program, known as CARE, provides a 20% discount on energy to qualifying fixed or lower income households. For more information about CARE or other financial assistance programs, you can visit our website at

¹ Spanish is currently not available on the San Diego Gas and Electric Company "on-hold" message.

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www.pge.com. Customers on the CARE program are also exempted from the current 9% interim electric surcharge.

To hear income guidelines to see if you qualify, press 1.

To receive an application form in the mail, press 2

Otherwise, press 5

(1 pressed)

You may apply for the CARE program based on the following income guidelines effective June 1, 2001. You may qualify if you have 1 or 2 members in your household, and your yearly income is \$22,000 or less, 3 members and your income is \$25,900 or less, or 4 members and your income is \$31,100 or less. For each additional member, add \$5,200 of annual income. This 20% discount is not effective until a completed application is received and approved.

To hear the qualifying guidelines again, press 1.

To receive an application form in the mail, press 2.

Otherwise, press 4.”

Customer Bill Statement

PG&E previously used the following modified text for the April-May customer bill CARE notice. PG&E proposes to comply with Section (b)(4) of Section 739.4. (To be printed in both English and Spanish) by continuing to use this text:

MORE HOUSEHOLDS CAN QUALIFY FOR THE CARE 20% DISCOUNT ON PG&E BILLS! FOR EXAMPLE, A HOUSEHOLD OF 4 EARNING LESS THAN \$30,100 MAY BE ELIGIBLE. CARE PARTICIPANTS ARE ALSO EXEMPT FROM RECENT ELECTRIC RATE INCREASES. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE THE ENCLOSED INSERT OR CALL 1-800-743-5000.

CARE OFRECE 20% DE DESCUENTO EN LA CUENTA DE ENERGIA A HOGARES QUE CALIFIQUEN. LOS PARTICIPANTES EN CARE ESTAN EXENTOS DEL AUMENTO EN LAS TARIFAS DE ELECTRICIDAD. EJ: FAMILIA DE 4 PUEDE SER ELEGIBLE SI SU INGRESO ES MENOS DE \$30,100. VEA EL FOLLETO ANEXO, O LLAME AL 1-800-743-5000.

Protests

Anyone wishing to protest this filing may do so by sending a letter by **August 19, 2001**, which is 20 days from the date of this filing. 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 mailed to:

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

Copies should also be mailed to the attention of the Director, Energy Division, Room 4005, and Jerry Royer, Energy Division, 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
Attention: Les Guliasi
Director, Regulatory Relations
77 Beale Street, Mail Code B10C
P.O. Box 770000
San Francisco, California 94177
Facsimile: (415) 973-7226

Effective Date

PG&E requests that this advice filing become effective on regular notice, **September 8, 2001**, which is 40 days after the date of this filing.

Notice

In accordance with General Order 96-A, Section III, Paragraph G, a copy of this advice letter is being sent electronically and via U.S. mail to parties shown on the attached list, and to the service lists for A. 00-11-009, et al., and R. 98-07-037. Address changes should be directed to Nelia Avendano at (415) 973-3529. Advice letter filings can also be accessed electronically at:

http://www.pge.com/customer_services/business/tariffs/

Vice President - Regulatory Relations

Attachments

cc: Service Lists – A. 00-11-009, et al., and R. 98-07-037