




Contra Costa County  
**Public Works**  
D e p a r t m e n t

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**DATE:** December 6, 2012  
**TO:** Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee  
Supervisor Federal D. Glover, District V, Chair  
Supervisor Mary N. Piepho, District III, Vice Chair  
**FROM:** *FOR* Julia R. Bueren, Public Works Director   
**SUBJECT:** **Report on PG&E Coordination with Cities and County for Street Light Maintenance**

**RECOMMENDATION**

ACCEPT this status report on the street light coordination effort between Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the County, and Cities for street light maintenance.

**BACKGROUND**

The Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee (TWIC) requested Public Works staff to report annually on the status of street light maintenance coordination efforts with PG&E.

Street light maintenance program improvements continue to take place. The Letter of Understanding (LOU), dated February 2008, between PG&E and County, states the commitment of PG&E for open communication and responsive service levels and actions in resolving issues related to street light performance. Communication channels have continued to remain open by conducting discussions at regular street light maintenance coordination meetings with the County, its constituent Cities and Towns.

Continuing the effort initiated in May 2008, and since reporting to TWIC on November 3, 2011, the County Public Works Department, PG&E and Cities have met on a quarterly basis. In 2012, meetings took place at City of San Ramon, City of Richmond and Contra Costa County Public Works Department. Topics throughout this year focused on maintenance and cost-saving measures, due to the current fiscal hardships facing governmental agencies in the County.

The quarterly meetings were valuable because those present were able to address issues related to street light maintenance, operations and increased efficiencies. Other discussion topics in 2012 were vandalism and solutions such as copper wire anti-theft devices, Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology and PG&Es Centerbore Wood Pole Replacement Projects.

Topics discussed at quarterly PG&E Street Light Coordination meetings are described in more detail on the following pages:

### **Street Light Maintenance, Operations and Repairs**

The overall coordination between PG&E, Cities and County on street light repairs is ongoing. In 2012, discussions focused on daily maintenance and issues related to completion of routine calls for service. After repeated conversations with PG&E management about delayed communication on the status of repairs on outstanding cases (beyond the 14-day maintenance period, as agreed in the LOU), PG&E made some changes in the reporting relationships of staff and reassigned the reporting of repairs to a dedicated unit located in Fresno.

PG&E call center relocation: In March 2012, PG&E transferred the call center for street light outages from the Concord offices to Fresno. The Concord office handled not only street light outages but also other internal work which put street light outages at a lower priority and thus delayed internal and external communications on the status of repairs of outages.

The newly established Fresno office and its staff are exclusively dedicated to the outages and the communication on repairs. Thus far we have noted improvement in communication to customers and response times.

14-day "routine" repair cases: Response time for most routine repairs has been within 14 days throughout the year as stated in the LOU. When an outage repair takes longer, PG&E previously was not consistent with communicating to County staff with a response timeframe. Improvements have been made since this issue was noted at TWIC in 2011. Currently, the number of cases taking longer to repair is reduced; and, the flow of information and communications regarding the pending repairs has improved.

The busiest time of the year for street light outage reports is the fall and winter season. It is around this time that the communications in repair status seem to be lacking. Although most of the required repairs are made, notification from PG&E on some of the repairs is not received promptly. County staff had conversations with PG&E management and requested a solution to this ongoing issue. The establishment of the Fresno office, dedicated to these repairs and reporting the work done, has resulted in improvements in this area.

Electric Corrective (EC) 90-day cases: PG&E submits a monthly outage report to agencies. With this report, agencies can track repairs and also see outages of which they were previously unaware, that may have been reported directly to PG&E and not come through the County or City which they are located within. This can allow staff to follow up, as needed.

PG&E continues to provide the County monthly outage reports with information on outstanding and incomplete repairs for the EC 90-day cases. County staff assists PG&E by providing a list of outstanding cases and requesting their status. In the past, responses have not been consistent and at times, information about the status of a case has been difficult to obtain from PG&E. Additional improvement was necessary in this area.

With the changes implemented in March 2012 by PG&E with respect to the street light outages call center, moving it from Concord to Fresno, improvement has been demonstrated by a reduction in the number of EC cases that extend beyond 90 days.

PG&E appears to continue to experience delayed reporting on field work completion particularly in the West County area; however, overall, there have been improvements in reporting over the last six months of 2012.

### **Vandalism on Street Lights (copper wire theft) and Solutions**

Thefts of copper wire from street lights in several Cities and unincorporated County areas continue. In one of the 2012 quarterly meetings, a presentation was made by a vendor of copper wire anti-theft devices. Emphasis for these devices is not on how to prevent theft but on deterrence. Vandals use crow bars or even jack hammers to enter electrical boxes and to pull the cable. An especially hard hit area for these methods has been along the Richmond Parkway. In addition to anti-theft devices, other security methods employed include engraving the agency's name on wires, pouring concrete on top of electrical boxes, welding shut metal plates covering electrical boxes, and covering boxes with ornamental trash cans or rocks. The County will try out the placement of aluminum wire instead of copper on a small section of Richmond Parkway and adding "No copper wire" stickers on poles in the area.

County street light maintenance crews are abreast of the industry methods and suggestions for street light wire protective measures and have implemented appropriate measures in particular areas where thefts are occurring frequently. Future development standards will require adding anti-theft measures to electrical systems installed.

### **Centerbore Wood Pole Replacement Program**

The life cycle of these poles has reached their end and need replacement. The replacement of centerbore wood poles throughout the County is part of the LOU between County and PG&E. PG&E initiated the replacement program in various cities in the County in 2011 and continued it through 2012. The unincorporated areas affected by the replacements included Danville, Walnut Creek, San Pablo, El Sobrante and Kensington. Replacements have been completed in all areas except Kensington. Due to the community expressing concern to the County and PG&E about this project in Kensington, work in this area has been halted and meetings with Supervisor Gioia, PG&E, County and the community are being held, with the goal of working toward resolution by the end of this year.

### **CONCLUSION**

The County, Cities, and PG&E are committed to continue the well-organized and efficient system for street lights. PG&E's reorganization and relocation of the call center has resulted in a staff dedicated exclusively to managing outage calls. County staff has experienced an improvement on PG&E's communication on the status of outage cases and more timely information on repairs that are completed. PG&E's group dedicated to only outages has improved customer service for County and PG&E; however, there is still room for improvement in communications regarding street light repairs reported in the West County areas.

PG&E Street Light Coordination meetings should continue on a quarterly basis. This enables County staff and Cities to collaborate on street light issues and to work together to develop

improvements for timely repairs and innovations. Cities continue to implement LED replacement and similar projects to increase energy efficiency and reduce costs; County and City staff, as well as PG&E, obtain benefits from the interactions at the quarterly meetings.

It is County's priority to deliver excellent quality customer service to its residents and to continue work toward assuring timely street light repairs.

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