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Lafayette Fire Station 16 reopening delayed until June

By Nick Marnell



The new ConFire Engine 16 Company - with nowhere to call home Photo ConFire

the week it is," McAlister said.

Section 5.3.1 of the PG&E Green Book, a listing of electrical and gas service requirements, lists five basic requirements for the installation of an electrical meter, including nonportable illumination on an unobstructed path to the meter and full access to the metering facilities by company personnel "whether the facilities are located indoors or outdoors."

"We're not looking for anything that we don't have in our other new stations," McAlister said to the board. Stations 85 and 84 in Pittsburg were completed in 2009 and 2010, and the electrical meter is inside both facilities. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is nearing completion of Fire Station 43 in north Orinda, and its electrical meter is also inside the building.

"For a meter reader not to be able to walk inside the bay to read the meter is ridiculous," said County Supervisor Candace Andersen, speaking as a ConFire director. "I am very frustrated."

As was McAlister, who attributed three weeks of the delayed station completion to PG&E, and said that claims from the general contractor are mounting. "PG&E does not recognize the need to get a fire station up and running," McAlister said.

The utility explained the rationale for its actions. "We apologize for the confusion over where the metering equipment at Fire (Station) 16 can be installed. Upon initial review, PG&E believed we could accommodate the request of the fire (district) and place the metering equipment inside. However upon further review, it was determined that installing the meter on the outside wall was the safest possible location," said company spokeswoman Tamar Sarkissian. "The preferred location for metering equipment is always outside. For safety reason, the equipment must be located in a PG&E-approved cabinet or closet. Meters can only be installed indoors, in an approved electric meter room with a door that leads directly outside."

Two days after McAlister went public over the issues with the utility, Wilmer Clark, PG&E service planning supervisor, sent ConFire written approval to place the electric meter inside the new Lafayette fire station. His approval included six conditions, including "24 hour access via lock box or key pad."

Until Fire Station 16 is completed, Engine Company 16 will operate out of Lafayette Station 15 on Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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