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New PG&E power poles installed along St. Mary's Road

By Vera Kochan



An old PG&E power pole, left, is dwarfed by a new one, right, along St. Mary's Road. Photo Andy Scheck

Anyone driving past the St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road intersection in Moraga will have noticed what appears to be a bunch of telephone poles lying on a mat in the vacant lot usually occupied in December by Bob's Christmas Trees.

According to Pacific Gas and Electric Co. spokesperson Tamar Sarkissian, the replacement poles are part of an electric hardening project. They are lying on rubber mats in order to preserve the lot surface, which is being leased. PG&E is wrapping up the work from the Lafayette Community Center's gas transmission project which began June 1. Electric and vegetation mitigation all along St. Mary's Road is part of that project.

"PG&E has been working to harden its electric system," stated Sarkissian. "For this particular project, that includes replacing approximately 80 electric poles with stronger and more resilient poles and installing 11,000 feet of larger, covered power lines in an effort to upgrade and strengthen the electric system to help reduce the threat of wildfire. Crews also installed down-guys and anchors, as well as making necessary equipment upgrades. This work is also part of efforts to reinforce the circuit between the Moraga and Rossmoor substations."

The old poles will be replaced by stronger poles, often made of composite materials. New, thicker power lines will replace old thin ones. They will be insulated, making them more resistant to weather, wind and broken branches.

When asked why the new poles are substantially taller than the old ones, Sarkissian explained, "Adding additional conductor and circuit requires taller, thicker and more resilient poles to support the heavier infrastructure. Taller poles are also needed because spacing is required to install double circuit on the poles."

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