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## MOFD official renders split decision in PG&E-San Ramon Valley Fire hearing

By Nick Marnell

At an October hearing over the justification of two fines issued by the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, hearing officer Jeff Isaacs sided with the district on one citation and with the utility on the other.

It was the first time Isaacs, fire marshal of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, presided over such a hearing.

"My role as the hearing officer was to protect the process, and insure that there was fair process and that each side was provided the opportunity to present their side and submit evidence," he said. "I then reviewed all testimony and evidence and issued a decision."

At issue was San Ramon Valley Fire Ordinance No. 35, which prohibits PG&E and any other electric utility from performing non-emergency electrical work - or any electrical work during periods of high fire danger - within district boundaries without 48 hours' prior notice to the district.

The ordinance also prohibits PG&E from deploying a safety and infrastructure protection team without notice, and it allows the district to fine the utility and recover costs for overseeing the company's electrical utility work after each violation.

In May, San Ramon Valley Fire responded to the explosion of a power transformer that occurred while PG&E maintenance crews performed work on-site, with two company safety and infrastructure protection teams on standby alert. Per its ordinance, the district fined the company \$1,000 for failing to provide advance notice of the two deployments and billed the utility for costs incurred.

Isaacs found that one of the safety and infrastructure protection teams on site was merely passing through the fire district, and technically not deployed to the incident. He dismissed that citation.

But because the second SIPT was specifically assigned work within the fire district, and PG&E gave no notice to the fire district as required by its ordinance, Isaacs upheld the district's \$500 fine against the utility.

"We are very happy that our ordinance, intended to hold PG&E accountable for their actions, is exposing PG&E for their lack of concern for our citizens' safety," San Ramon Valley Fire Chief Paige Meyers said. "I want the citizens to know we offered to waive the fine in its entirety if PG&E would agree to just follow our ordinance in the future. Not only did they not take me up on the offer, they never even responded."

According to PG&E spokesman Matt Nauman, the company is evaluating the decision and deciding how to proceed.

The MOFD board unanimously passed a similar ordinance Oct. 21.

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