



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published August 30th, 2023

PG&E reps attend Town Council meeting to provide power outage updates

By Vera Kochan

In an attempt to update and console certain residential customers in Moraga and Lafayette who've experienced an inordinate amount of power outages within the past couple of months, Pacific Gas & Electric Company representatives came to Moraga's Aug. 23 town council meeting to explain and hopefully reassure customers that the problem is being addressed. PG&E reps planned to attend the Aug. 28 Lafayette City Council Meeting, which occurred after press time.

PG&E's Local Government Affairs Representative Sarah Yoell stated, "We understand the inconvenience that the outages have caused to the residents of Moraga and Lafayette, and we understand that the communication that was given to residents was not acceptable, and we're here today to respond to what was causing the outages - what we're doing, and we've done a lot of work to address the outages and improve the situation." Because Yoell's territory covers the Lamorinda region, she asked Aaron Johnson, PG&E's Vice President of the Bay Area Region to join her in addressing the town's concerns. Johnson apologized to residents and the town's leadership for the slow communication regarding the many outages and mentioned that many of PG&E's executives live in the Lamorinda area and are aware of the customer dissatisfaction.

"We have not found the challenge with the Rossmoor 1108 circuit," stated Johnson when referring to the problem in question, "and we're pretty frustrated with that. Within a month-ish period there have been over seven outages on that circuit, many of them concentrated together, and we have done everything that we know how to do to find the challenge on that circuit."

Johnson enumerated several measures that PG&E has attempted in order to fix the problem. They've reconfigured the circuit to remove some customers to other circuits; done full inspections of the circuit; vegetation teams have made inspections; they've added 14 fault indicators to the lines; added a sectionalizing device (a circuit breaker on the grid that breaks down into smaller sections), and more. ? "We continue to search for the challenge - the gremlin in the grid," Johnson said. "We believe there's a very small defect somewhere on the circuit, and it's hiding, and it's not showing itself, because the fast trip setting that we have to have the circuit on turns off so quickly that it's basically hiding that fault from us. It is turning off before we would usually see a hot spot."

Public comments were many and came in a variety of grievances: Misinformation given; no response at all; customers felt like they were talked-down to; on hold for lengthy periods; no email as an alternative form of communication; would like some type of credit on future invoice statements; how does PG&E expect to handle the demands of the future; what about an intentional overload of the circuit to expose the problem; customers are tired of the 800 number and want to call a direct line; students, doctors and the work-from-home labor force were greatly affected by the continual outages.

Council Member Steve Woehleke wondered how reliable the Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings (EPSS) program was with so many false alarms, while Council Member Kerry Hillis asked how long customers had to wait before a more aggressive solution was explored. Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda would like to see EPSS outage notifications; and Council Member David Shapiro wanted to know why PG&E should expect customers to trust anything the electric company tells them given their track record.

Johnson acknowledged that PG&E has a long way to go in order to earn trust back from their customers, and with regards to an invoice credit, those aren't given out for outages lasting less than 24 hours. He explained that having a dedicated phone line to handle a large volume of phone calls wouldn't be practical, but pledged that PG&E would be proactive as far as contacting customers. He added that the company is already thinking ahead with a 10-year plan for future electrical needs, but that attempting to purposely overload the system to expose "the gremlin" would just invite bigger problems. Johnson stressed the importance of customers signing up for outage alerts by visiting: www.pge.com/notifications.

Mayor Renata Sos asked PG&E for a return visit in the near future, with the expectation of a more positive update in regards to the issue at hand.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA