

CALIFORNIA MUNICIPAL UTILITIES ASSOCIATION



Statement before the Subcommittee on Gas and
Electric Infrastructure Safety

August 6, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Gil Topete; I am the Director for Energy for the California Municipal Utilities Association. I also have with me Mr. Justin Wynne who handles many of CMUA's Regulatory Safety issues; he'll answer any specific questions I may be unable to answer.

I was asked to address what information might be valuable, pertaining to public safety for the utilities I represent. So I'll start off by providing a few details about CMUA and our membership....

CMUA represents 40 locally owned electric utilities and electric utility districts with a wide range of customers and utility sizes. The majority of my members are a tenth or less in size of any of the state IOUs, and to put this into some perspective, my two largest member's total approximately 2 million customer accounts with a combined service territory of 1500 square miles, compared to PG&E and Southern CA Edison with over 10 million customer accounts in a service area covering 120,000 square miles.

As you know, the oversight of publically owned electric utilities differs significantly then investor owned utilities. Instead of one state agency having this responsibility, oversight resides at the local level in the form of an elected utility Governing Board, or a City Council.

Accountability and decision making for these publicly owned utilities is a local version of what happens here at the state Capitol, and similarly our Governing Boards and City Councils are held directly accountable by the constituents they serve and represent.

For all of my members, providing electricity is a public service, and if we fall short on our obligation for reliable and safe service, its guaranteed our customers will let us know quickly followed by our Governing Boards, City Councils, and our elected representatives here in Sacramento.

So as publicly owned utilities, our local governance meetings are open to the public, making our decision making process transparent and answerable to our customers.

I believe our governing structure provides more transparency than either the IOUs or CPUC can provide, simply because our decision making bodies are locally elected members from the community served by their local electric utility.

While reliability standards and safety standards are distinct issues, you cannot have a reliable electric system without safety as a primary component of reliability.

To that end CMUA members collaborate with other utilities, cities, state agencies and safety standard organizations to develop, implement and share safety related information with each other.

Some examples of this collaboration include working with organizations like:

- The Transmission and Distribution Maintenance Management Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to transmission and distribution safety issues, bringing domestic and international utilities together to plan and discuss safety and maintenance. This year they meet in Los Angeles and next year in Canada.
- Cal-Osha on injury reports and development of employee safety hand-books.
- The Western Underground Committee, dedicated to the safe, reliable, construction, operation and maintenance of underground transmission and distribution systems.
- The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers on peer-to-peer safety programs like “Hold the Pull” and “Near Miss”.
 - Hold the Pull is a safety initiative based on linemen sharing their mutual responsibility for safety and motivating safety awareness.
 - Near Miss is a program where linemen share and learn from their own experiences out on the field.
- We cooperate with the CPUC on audits, inspections and General Orders relevant to Safety Standards.
- CMUA organizes stakeholder meetings to discuss and review any proposed changes to construction and maintenance standards proposed by the CPUC.

Additionally, specific to reporting injuries, accidents or what caused an outage, this primarily depends on the circumstances of an event.

For example, employee injuries must be reported to the state through Cal-Osha while injuries to non-employees can get reported to the utility in a variety of ways:

- In the event of an accident –first responders where applicable will contact the utility.
- For pole accidents or accidents that result in the loss of power at the distribution level, utility personnel will be sent out to contain the area, restore power, and to investigate and compile safety reports. The details and results of an investigation are provided to our Governing Board or City Council on a periodic basis.
- Safety issues brought before the Board or City Counsel are often on the agenda and are part of the public record.

- Additionally, these reports are often the basis for developing our maintenance budgets that have to be discussed and approved in a public meeting.

I'll conclude by stating, that CMUA's members take their responsibility for a safe working environment and reliable electric system very seriously, and are frequently collaborating with others in the utility industry on ways to improve their performance and commitment to safety.

I am happy to answer any questions by the Committee