

The



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www.basslakeaction.org



EID ANNOUNCES REDUCED WATER AND SEWER RATE HIKES

At a special rate hearing held on Thursday, February 4, 2010, the Board of Directors of the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) approved an increase to the rate schedule that was much less than the increases that were originally announced in December. Pressure to scale back the rate hikes had come mainly from the Citizens against Rate Extortion (CARE), a grassroots group that was formed after the first rate hike proposal was announced.

The EID had originally proposed rate increases of 35 percent in 2010, 15 percent in 2011, and 5 percent increases in years 2012, 2013 and 2014, for a cumulative rate increase of 80 percent over the period. The revised rate structure will include a rate increase of 18 percent in 2010, 15 percent in 2011, and 5 percent in years 2012, 2013 and 2014, for a cumulative rate increase of 57 percent over the period.

Customer write-in protests fell short of the number required to prevent the hikes, but rate increase critics said that the almost 7,000 protest letters prompted the board to pass increases less than first proposed. Concerns voiced at well-attended community workshops over the past month also gave rise to the board's decision to mute the rate increases.

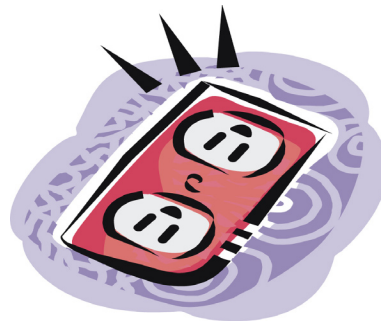
In addition to the reduced increase for 2010, the board told the General Manager

to find additional savings that would decrease further increases, and authorized the appointment of a Ratepayer Advisory Committee, a review of the rate structure prior to implementing rate increases for years following 2010, an independent cost of services study, and a reconciliation of the capital expenditures and bond proceeds and other funding sources.

CARE thanked EID for reducing the 2010 rate increase to 18%. However, CARE said they were disappointed that the EID passed a three-year rate structure with a 15% increase in 2011 and a 5% increase in 2012.

CARE said they are very concerned about the severe financial hardship the cumulative 42% rate increase will place on many EID ratepayers, especially the 30% living on fixed income, and the more than 12% unemployed. It urged the EID to put every expense on the table--capital improvements, appropriate staffing numbers, salaries, and benefits--before implementing those future increases.

CARE says it looks forward to working with the EID toward a rate structure for 2011 and future years that would raise the rates enough to maintain a quality water system while minimizing the impact on the ratepayers. ~



PG&E RAISES RATES FOR 2010, ASKS FOR HIKES OVER 5 YEARS

Most Pacific Gas and Electric Co. (PG&E) customers began paying more for electricity starting January 1. The average rate increase to electric users is about five percent. PG&E

says that while rate increases will vary by power usage in individual homes, a household that has been paying \$164 a month will now pay \$172, an increase of about eight dollars. The rate hikes were approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which regulates electricity rates in California.

Rate changes will not affect low-income customers enrolled in the California Rates for Energy program. Those customers get discount rates based on various qualifying standards.

PG&E also wants to raise its rates in 2011 by an average of 6.5 percent, primarily to cover maintenance and upgrades to its distribution networks and generation plants, the utility stated in a preliminary filing with state regulators.

All told, the increases would generate a total of \$4.1 billion in new revenue for PG&E over three years.

One way to beat these increases is to use more efficient electrical appliances. Rebates or tax credits are available if you replace your present appliance with a more efficient central air conditioner, room air conditioner, variable speed motor air handler system, or whole house fan, and there is also a duct-sealing incentive. Other incentives, such as for installing a variable-speed motor on your pool pump, are also available.

For further information, see the Save Energy and Money section under the For My Home tab at www.pge.com. ~





INTERPRETING YOUR PG&E ELECTRIC BILL

The cost of electricity depends on where you live, how much you use, and possibly when you use it. There are also fixed charges that you pay every month no matter how much electricity you use just for the privilege of being a customer of the electric company, no matter how much energy you use.

Most utility companies charge a higher rate when you use more than a certain amount of energy, and they also charge more during summer months when electric use is higher. Our provider, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) measures how much electricity you use in kilowatt-hours, abbreviated kWh. Your PG&E bill has increasing charges per kWh depending on how much electricity you use. You add them all up to get the total cost per kWh on your bill.

PG&E uses a baseline rate structure that provides residential customers with a minimum quantity of electricity and gas at the lowest possible cost. A monthly baseline kWh quantity is indicated on your bill, which is your daily baseline kWh multiplied by the number of billing days in your billing cycle. Energy use below the baseline kWh amount is billed at a lower rate than is energy use over the baseline. Increasing rate tiers that are percentages over the baseline are progressively more expensive, and are designed as an incentive to conserve energy. For example, if you use 100 kWh in a billing cycle and your baseline is 75 kWh, you will be charged for 75 kWh at the baseline rate, while the excess kWh will be more expensive.

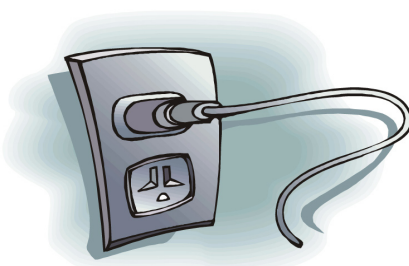
In other words, the baseline electric rates are the least expensive tier of electric rates. After a customer uses up the baseline allowance of kWh, electricity progressively

costs more and more as the number of kWh used grows into ever-more expensive tiers. The more you use, the more you pay and the faster you pay.

Residences along Bass Lake Road are in baseline territory S, which includes most of the Central Valley, including Sacramento and Folsom. Within baseline territory S are two classes of electricity users: Code B - Basic and Code H - All-electric. Code B - Basic daily baseline quantities are applicable to electric customers whose primary heat source is other than electricity, such as propane or natural gas. Code H - All-Electric baseline quantities are applicable to service to customers with permanently installed electric heating as the primary heat source, who live in what are generally referred to as all-electric homes. Code B - Basic users have a daily base rate of 16.5 kWh in the summer and 12.7 kWh in the winter. Code H - All-Electric users have a daily base rate of 20.1 Kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity in the summer and 32 kWh of electricity in the winter.

Customers who live in homes with natural gas or propane heating should see the Rate Schedule SB Residential Service on their bill. Customers who live in all-electric home should see the Rate Schedule SH Residential Service on their bills.

Note that several residents of the Hills of El Dorado were misclassified as Basic homes instead of All-Electric homes and have been paying higher electric rates for years. PG&E says that they are only responsible for billing errors that occurred during the last three years. Be sure to look at your bill and see that you are properly classified. ~



ASISSTANCE AVAILABLE FOR DISADVANTAGED PG&E ELECTRIC USERS

These are challenging economic times, and on top of it all Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) is charging us more for our electricity. However, as a regulated utility, PG&E has several programs designed to lessen the burden of electric costs for certain types of

disadvantaged households under its California Alternate Rates for Electricity (CARE) program. The balance of this article briefly discusses the programs available under CARE. Consult the company's website www.pge.com for further information.

The CARE program can help manage energy costs when there are financial challenges or unexpected changes in a ratepayer's situation. The CARE program provides a monthly discount on energy bills for income qualified households and housing facilities. Qualifications are based on the number of persons living in your home and your total annual household income.

You can apply for a monthly discount on your energy bill through the Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) program if your household meets the following requirements: the PG&E bill is in your name, you live at the address where the discount will be received, you are not claimed as a dependent on another person's income tax return other than your spouse, you do not share an energy meter(s) with another home, your household meets the FERA income eligibility requirements, and you agree to notify PG&E if your household no longer qualifies for the FERA discount.

The Energy Partners Program (EPP) provides income-qualified customers free energy education, weatherization measures and energy-efficient appliances to reduce gas and electric usage. You qualify if your household's total annual gross income does not exceed PG&E's income guidelines, you must receive gas and/or electricity from PG&E, and if your residence has never participated in the Energy Partners Program or if your residence participated prior to 1999. Measures EPP may provide include attic insulation, caulking, CFLs, door weatherstripping, energy-saver showerhead, minor home repair, water heater blanket, and may replace evaporative coolers and refrigerators for qualified customers

Medical Baseline provides additional quantities of energy at the lowest (baseline) price for residential customers. To qualify for Medical Baseline, a California-licensed physician must certify that a full-time resident in your home has one of these medical conditions: dependent on life-support equipment while at home, a paraplegic, hemiplegic, quadriplegic or multiple sclerosis patient with special heating and/or cooling needs, a scleroderma patient with special heating needs, or a life-threatening illness or compromised immune system with special heating and/or cooling requirements

(continued on page 3)

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello All,

It's a good thing February is the shortest month, for I'm tired of winter, and I'm ready for March. The plants in our garden also seem anxious see the cold days of winter to go, and for the soft spring air to release them from their sleep. Two exceptions are our winter daphne, which is bravely sporting its red and white blooms, and the rosemary, which has purple blooms practically all year.

We are also awaiting the arrival of some new grape vines to replace several in the vineyard that developed fanleaf virus last year. The virus is the oldest known grape vine disease, and causes distorted leaves, crooked canes, and poor fruit set. Vectored by nematodes, the only way to avoid the virus is by using a vine grafted on a vigorous rootstock that will resist the nematodes. We will see how it goes.

This issue of the Bulletin is primarily devoted to what is happening with our utilities. I was happy to see that the EID could reduce the original rate hike, even though it's a bad time to raise rates at all. Then PG&E is raising rates, too. Though its hard to do much about water and electricity, one bright spot is propane, where you can change suppliers to seek better prices. Look for information about propane suppliers and how and where to get the best deals in upcoming Bulletins.

Sincerely,

John E. Thomson

President

Happy Valentine's Day

PG&E (continued)

to sustain the patient's life or prevent deterioration of the patient's medical condition. Severe allergies, if certified by a physician, may qualify one for the Medical Baseline program

The Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help (REACH) Program has provided emergency energy assistance to low-income families within the PG&E service area who are in jeopardy of losing their electricity services. REACH is a one-time energy-assistance program sponsored by PG&E and administered through the Salvation Army from 170 offices in northern and central California. Those who have experienced an uncontrollable or unforeseen hardship may receive an energy credit up to \$200, credit amount based on the past due amount of the bill. REACH assistance may be available once within an 18 month period, but exceptions can be made for seniors, the physically challenged and the terminally ill. See if you qualify, and then contact the Salvation Army at 1-800-933-9677. ~



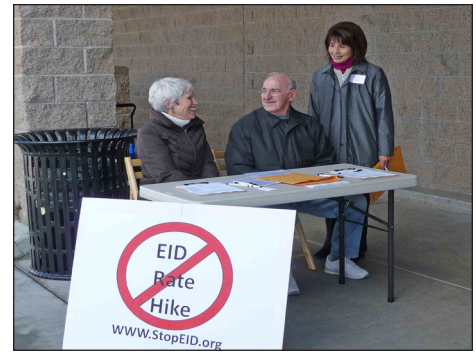
A typical SmartMeter

SMART METER DISPUTES ERUPT

PG&E's \$2.2 billion program to install 10 million SmartMeters on homes and businesses throughout California to better monitor energy consumption is off to a rough start. PG&E is installing more than 12,000 SmartMeters a day, with the goal of having 10 million installed by the end of 2012. A smart meter is an advanced meter that identifies consumption in more detail than a conventional meter; and optionally, but generally, communicates that information via some network back to the local utility for monitoring and billing purposes. However, where the meters have been widely deployed, many consumers are not happy.

SmartMeters are mandatory and there is no way to opt out of getting one. The meters are PG&E property, and the utility says it has the regulatory authority to install and

(continued on page 4)



Left to right at Bel Air Market, Sandy and Art Hitchcock, and Joanne Prada



Left to right at Safeway, Herb Prevost, Doug Kennedy, and Steve Slattery

BLAC VOLUNTEERS STAFF CARE PROTEST LETTER DRIVE

Volunteers from Bass Lake Action Committee (BLAC) and the local community recently spent a day assisting Citizens Against Rate Extortion (CARE) to gather protest letters against the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) rate hikes.

The action was taken under the auspices of BLAC's voter education program, which aims to keep voters aware of the issues on which they have a voice and also may vote.

The volunteers received warm welcomes from the vast majority of the public, and were repeatedly thanked for their service to the community. They covered several local super markets and were able to deliver more than 550 protest letters to the EID on the Wednesday before the EID rate meeting.

The volunteers were Jeff and Laurie Black, Jim Pickett, Carol Kovar, Sandy and Art Hitchcock, Gianna White, Glen Benard, Dawn Penman, Chandra Miede, Pat Ebert, Jill Thuman (who worked two shifts at two different stores), Steve Slattery, Doug Kennedy, Tasha Camacho, Joan Boutselis, Frank and Helene Sulzberger, Dick Parsons, Robert and Grace Shauger, Ed Pesce and Bonnie Dalton. The efforts of the volunteers were coordinated by Kathy and Herb Prevost and Joanne Prada. ~

SMARTMETERS *(continued)*

maintain them.

Bass Lake and El Dorado Hills are served by the Placerville office of PG&E. According to the utility, SmartMeters are going to be installed in our area in the period between March and October of this year.

In the Central Valley, several PG&E customers who already have SmartMeters have complained of skyrocketing electricity bills over the summer, leading to widespread complaints that SmartMeters either malfunction or were used to intentionally overcharge.

The flood of consumer complaints led the California Public Utilities Commission to announce that it will require an independent third party to evaluate the SmartMeters for accuracy. ~



*"I'm a little groundhog, it's my day
Wake and stretch, go out and play.
Down in my burrow, down so deep,
Time to wake, from my long winter's
sleep.*

*Grumble, grumble, scratch, scratch
Grunt, grunt, yawn.*

I'll eat my breakfast in your front lawn.

*I'm a little groundhog, it's my day.
Wake up and stretch, go out and play.*

- Author Unknown

**UPSET WITH PROPANE PRICES?**

Propane prices are subject to a number of influences, some common to all petroleum products, and others unique to propane. The price of propane is influenced by many factors, including the prices of competing fuels in each market; the distance propane has to travel to reach a customer; and the volumes used by a customer.

A number of the homes in Bass Lake are currently served by Amerigas, who was able to obtain somewhat of a monopoly on furnishing propane to the area through exclusive agreements with the developers of Bridlewood and Woodridge to furnish propane and tanks at a reasonable price. The agreements have since expired, and Bass Lake residents have reported that their propane bills have escalated to an alarming degree.

This recent run-up in propane prices has resulted in propane committees being formed by Bridlewood Canyon and Bass Lake Action Committee to determine which local propane distributors offer the best prices and service. Committee members have been surprised at the wide variation in both prices

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and services among the distributors they have contacted.

The propane committees expect to have a report ready by the end of February that sets forth the local distributors that appear to have the best prices and services currently available. The results of the committees' work will be carried in the Bulletin when it is complete. Hopefully the reports will enable propane users to select the propane service that will serve them best. ~

BLAC SETS MARCH MEETING

The March BLAC meeting will include a discussion of propane suppliers in El Dorado County and their available prices on services and propane. How to change propane suppliers will also be discussed. The meeting will be held on March 1, 2010, at 7:00 PM at the Bridlewood Canyon Homeowners Clubhouse on Devon Way in Bridlewood. Those attending may use gate code #9500 to enter that evening.

For information contact Vice President Kathy Prevost at 530-6772-6836. ~

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