

CPM Among Five Top Law Firms to Announce Series of Lawsuits against PG&E on behalf of Fire Victims

Davis Vanguard
11.14.2017

On Tuesday, November 14th at 11 a.m., attorneys from five of California's most prestigious law firms will hold a press conference to announce a series of lawsuits filed against Pacific Gas & Electric Company on behalf of victims of the North Bay Fires. The plaintiffs include Sonoma County resident Gregory Wilson who, along with his wife, sought refuge in a swimming pool in an effort to avoid being burned as well as former San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan and his wife, Wendy Paskin-Jordan who fled the fire and lost their Santa Rosa home.

"When I looked up, the flames were 50 or 60 feet high coming over the hills and they were coming our way," Jordan told the San Francisco Chronicle. "There are people worse off than we are —seniors, on fixed incomes who lost their homes and are sitting in shelters."

Attorneys at Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP, Dreyer Babich Buccola Wood Campora, LLP, Panish Shea & Boyle LLP, Walkup, Melodia, Kelly & Schoenberger and Abbey, Weitzenberg, Warren & Emery have joined forces and resources to investigate and prosecute claims for which PG&E is responsible. The San Francisco-based utility has a well-documented disregard for safety regulations. and has been the subject of repeated criticism of effective maintenance and inspection practices of their facilities and equipment in light of an aging infrastructure. The law firm investigators have spent hundreds of hours on the causes and contributing factors that led to one of the most destructive and deadly fires in California history.

"The nearly 50-page complaint being filed contains the most comprehensive and exhaustive assessment of multiple failures by PG&E that led or contributed to some of the most destructive and deadly

Attorneys

Frank M. Pitre

Practice Areas

Commercial Litigation

Personal Injury & Wrongful Death

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wildfires California has ever seen,” says Frank Pitre of Cochet, Pitre & McCarthy LLP.

The Tubbs Fire, Atlas Fire, Pocket Fire, Nuns-Adobe-Norrbom-Partrick-Pressley-Oakmont Fire, Redwood Fire and Sulphur Fire are collectively referred to as the North Bay Fires. These catastrophic firestorms claimed the lives of at least 43 people, burned 200,000-plus acres, destroyed more than 8,000 homes and structures as well as displaced tens-of-thousands of residents in North Bay counties. To date, damages from the North Bay Fires have totaled more than \$3 billion, making them the costliest wildfires in American history in terms of insured loss.

In published accounts, PG&E was reportedly forced to make “trade-off decisions” between keeping rates affordable for consumers and spending more money to reduce its wildfire risk, the media reported that one official said in a regulatory filing submitted two years before the North Bay firestorm.

“Risk cannot be completely driven out of PG&E’s – or any – business,” Janaize Markland, a PG&E risk manager wrote in May 2015 in describing the company’s risk assessment practices to the state Public Utilities Commission.

The statement appears to be in sharp contrast to CEO Geisha Williams’ testimony in July which claimed that the company has a zero tolerance policy for vegetation contact wildfires.

Meanwhile other other reports of power equipment failures turned the spotlight on PG&E which raised questions about how well it maintained equipment and whether it adequate cut back trees from power lines as required by state law to reduce fire risk.