

CPM Clients Wildfire Victims Accuse PG&E of Resisting Oversight

Courthouse News

03.04.2019

Wildfire victims on Friday denounced Pacific Gas and Electric's reluctance to let independent auditors oversee its wildfire prevention work.

"History has repeatedly demonstrated that PG&E is incapable of policing itself to ensure that its promises to have learned from past mistakes are kept," attorneys Frank Pitre and Steven Campora, representing wildfire victims, wrote in a 113-page filing to U.S. District Judge William Alsup.

Alsup is overseeing PG&E's probation in a criminal case related to the fatal 2010 San Bruno pipeline explosion.

In an earlier brief, Pitre and Campora laid out a long list of accusations about PG&E's past misdeeds, along with recommendations for improvement. Last month, the embattled utility told Alsup it was adopting most reforms proposed by the wildfire victims, but it swiftly rejected two suggestions — new trainings for contracted tree workers and an independent audit board.

PG&E said it already has procedures in place to ensure its contractors are properly trained and that it is currently expanding certification requirements for those laborers. Pitre and Campora complained Friday that those requirements fall short.

"PG&E provides no evidence for its claims regarding the training, experience and/or knowledge of its tree contractors," the lawyers wrote in their brief, adding that PG&E's tree contractors were held liable for contributing to multiple wildfires between 2004 and 2008.

Attorneys

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On the issue of independent auditors, PG&E maintains that it already submits to the oversight of state regulators and a court-appointed monitor as part of its five-year probation. The company also contends that its internal quality-control and quality-assurance processes adequately serve as checks on the company's safety work.

But Campora and Pitre insisted Friday that the company's current level of oversight is lacking, especially given PG&E's track record of failing to comply with federal pipeline safety laws and state wildfire prevention laws.

"PG&E needs to be supervised and monitored," the lawyers wrote in their brief. "The [California Public Utilities Commission] lacks the resources to perform the detailed, sophisticated monitoring that is needed."

Alsup is currently weighing whether to impose strict wildfire-prevention terms on PG&E as a condition of its probation. PG&E complained in January that Alsup's proposal to make it re-inspect its entire electrical grid, trim or remove all trees near its power lines and shut off power in windy conditions could cost the company \$150 billion.

The utility, which cited \$30 billion in potential wildfire liability when it declared bankruptcy last month, submitted its own \$2.3 billion wildfire prevention plan to state regulators on Feb. 7. The CPUC is expected to approve a finalized version of that plan by the end of May... *(To read the entire article, please click [HERE](#))*