

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



March 25, 2021

Natalie Wales
Director of Regulatory Policy & Compliance
California Water Service Company
1720 North First St
San Jose, CA 95112-4598

Dear Ms. Wales,

The Commission has approved California Water Service Company's Advice Letter No. 2404, filed on March 4, 2021, regarding 12-Month Emergency Customer Protections Compliance Filing for COVID-19.

Enclosed is a copy of the advice letter with an effective date of March 4, 2021 for the utility's files.

Please contact Kevin Truong at VT4@cpuc.ca.gov or 415-703-1353, if you have any questions.

Thank you,

/s/ROBIN BRYANT

Robin Bryant
Water Division

Enclosures

**CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DIVISION OF WATER AND AUDITS**

Advice Letter Cover Sheet

California Water Service
Utility Name: Company
District: All Regulated Areas (including Travis and Grand Oaks)
CPUC Utility #: U-60-W
Advice Letter #: 2404
Tier: ☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ Compliance
Authorization: D.19-07-015
Description: 12-Month Emergency Customer Protections Compliance Filing for COVID-19

Date Mailed to Service List: 03/04/2021
Protest Deadline (20th Day): 03/24/2021
Review Deadline (30th Day): 04/03/2021
Requested Effective Date: N/A
Rate Impact: none

The protest or response deadline for this advice letter is 20 days from the date that this advice letter was mailed to the service list. Please see the "Response or Protest" section in the advice letter for more information.

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Utility Contact: Sergio Esquivel

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DWA Contact: Tariff Unit

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DWA USE ONLY

DATE

STAFF

COMMENTS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>STAFF</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

[] APPROVED

[] WITHDRAWN

[] REJECTED

Signature: _____

Comments: _____

Date: _____

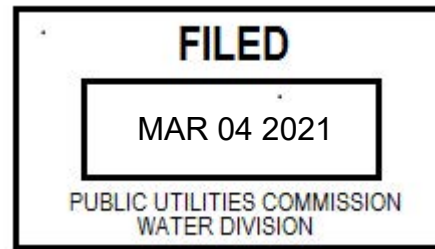


CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

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SAN JOSE, CA 95112 • (408) 367-8200 • F (408) 367-8428

March 4, 2021

Advice Letter No. 2404



To the California Public Utilities Commission:

California Water Service Company ("Cal Water") respectfully submits this Tier 1 advice letter applicable to all regulated areas in California (including Travis and Grand Oaks).

Please note that, consistent with the Commission's guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic, this advice letter is only being distributed electronically to the Water Division and the attached service lists.

Summary

This advice letter complies with the requirements of D.19-07-015 requiring Class A water companies to file a Tier 1 advice letter 12 months (as a default) after an event that triggers the Commission's Emergency Customer Protections.

Background

In Decision (D.) 19-07-015, the Commission established a permanent set of minimum emergency disaster customer protection measures that the utilities are mandated to implement in the event of a declared emergency.¹ Pursuant to (Ordering Paragraph (OP) 1, emergency disaster customer relief protections shall apply to utility customers in areas affected by a disaster declared a state of emergency by the Governor of California or the President of the United States.

On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom (Governor) declared a State of Emergency in response to the outbreak of novel coronavirus, COVID-19.² In response to a March 17, 2020 letter from then Executive Director Stebbins to energy, water and communication corporations to retroactively apply customer protection measures from March 4, 2020 onward during the pendency of the COVID-19 pandemic, for up to one year with an option to extend, Cal Water submitted AL 2379 on March 30, 2020 affirming the company's compliance with specific emergency customer protections and outreach activities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 17, 2020, the Commission issued Resolution M-4842, which ratified directions provided by the Commission's Executive Director on March 17, 2020. Cal Water filed AL 2383 in compliance with Resolution M-4842.

¹ D.19-07-015 at 4.

² <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/04/governor-newsom-declares-state-of-emergency-to-help-state-prepare-for-broader-spread-of-covid-19/>.



On February 11, 2021, the Commission adopted Resolution M-4849, *Authorization and Order Directing Utilities to Extend Emergency Customer Protections to Support California Customers through June 30, 2021, and to File Transition Plans for the Expiration of the Emergency Customer Protections*.³ Resolution M-4849 requires the Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) to file a transition plan “to facilitate a smooth transition for customers when the Emergency Customer Protections are lifted.”⁴ In addition, OP 2 requires IOUs to demonstrate compliance with emergency customer protections through June 30, 2021:

2. Electric, gas, communications, and water corporations subject to this Resolution shall file a Tier 1 Advice Letter no later than 10 days after this Resolution’s approval demonstrating compliance with the extension of Emergency Customer Protections to June 30, 2021. Should any of the actions utilities are taking to implement Emergency Customer Protections need be revised from already disposed Resolution M-4842 Advice Letter compliance filings, or if certain customer protections were inapplicable during the pandemic and not already noted and accepted as such in prior filings, these revisions should be noted in the compliance Advice Letter to this Resolution. ... Water corporations shall serve copies of the Advice Letters to R.18-03-011 and R.17-06-024 proceeding service lists. ...⁵

Discussion

This advice letter is intended to comply with Ordering Paragraphs 11 and 12 of D.19-07-015. To the extent the Commission believes more information is needed for such compliance, Cal Water respectfully requests further guidance.

Summary of Customer Protections, Outreach, Impacts, and Costs

Ordering Paragraph 11 of D.19-07-015 states:

All Class-A Water utilities . . . shall file a Tier 1 Advice Letter at the default, 12-month conclusion of customer protection period (running from the date that customer protections related to the specific disaster became effective), or as reasonably determined by the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, detailing the mandated protections offered to the customer affected by the disaster, the start and end periods customers received the emergency customer protections, the outreach efforts conducted, the customer impacts, and the associated cost.

³ <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M365/K448/365448995.PDF>

⁴ Res. M-4849 at 10.

⁵ Res. M-4849 at 33.



As detailed in previous advice letters, Cal Water is meeting the specific customer protection requirements of D.19-07-015 in the following manner:

- (1) Activation of the Catastrophic Event Memorandum Account (CEMA) effective to the date of the Governor's declaration of a state of emergency - March 4, 2020;
 - Cal Water is tracking the costs associated with COVID-19 using an accounting "product code," and sent a letter on April 1, 2020 informing Executive Director Stebbins that it was activating its CEMA for COVID-19 retroactively to March 4, 2020.
- (2) Make insurance claims on all costs and expenses incurred as a result of the pandemic, and credit insurance payments to the CEMA;
 - If Cal Water determines there have been losses related to COVID-19 that qualify for insurance recovery, Cal Water will file such insurance claims and credit any monies received to the CEMA.
- (3) Work cooperatively with affected customers to resolve unpaid bills, and minimize disconnections for non-payment;
- (4) Waive reconnection or facilities fees for customers and suspend deposits for customers who must reconnect to the system;
- (5) Provide reasonable payment options to customers;
 - Consistent with the Emergency Customer Protections described in **Items 3, 4, and 5**, above, Cal Water has been working with residential and small business customers to resolve unpaid bills, minimize disconnections for nonpayment, provide reasonable payment options, and waive all reconnection fees until at least June 30, 2021.⁶ (Cal Water does not request deposits for initiation of service or charge fees for late payment.)
- (6) Waive bills for victims who lost their homes or if their homes are rendered uninhabitable; and
- (7) Authorize a pro rata waiver of any fixed element of a water bill for the time that the home is uninhabitable, even if the reason for it being uninhabitable is not loss of water service.⁷
 - At this time, Cal Water does not believe that the customer protections described in **Items 6 and 7** are applicable to this emergency because

⁶ Cal Water reserves the right to withhold any of these customer protections if a customer has been shut off for reasons other than nonpayment.

⁷ Res. M-4842 at 6-7.



the COVID-19 pandemic is not rendering homes uninhabitable in the manner discussed in D.19-07-015.

In addition, Cal Water has suspended shut-offs for nonpayment for all customers, consistent with Executive Order N-42-20 (April 2, 2020) of Governor Newsom, and worked to reconnect customers who had been disconnected for nonpayment since March 4, 2020 (and in some cases, since February 27, 2020).

Cal Water is also maintaining the participant status of all customers in the Customer Assistance Program/Low-Income Ratepayer Assistance program (CAP/LIRA) without requiring recertification. The trend in CAP/LIRA participation since the start of the pandemic can be seen in the monthly submissions of data filed in R.17-06-024.

Cal Water's customer outreach about the emergency customer protections include the following:

- Cal Water is regularly updating local communities and customers as circumstances change.
- Cal Water is has been urging customers to contact Cal Water to discuss payment arrangements if they have outstanding balances through our website, media, city leaders, social media, email, bill messages or onserts, and talking points for Customer Service Representatives.⁸

With the year-end close of its financial accounting books, Cal Water is now in the process of determining which costs tracked in the CEMA may be incremental to those already in rates.

Summary of Collaborative Engagement

Ordering Paragraph 12 of D.19-07-015 states:

All Class-A Water utilities . . . shall file a Tier 1 Advice Letter twelve months from a qualifying event, documenting the collaborative engagement they had with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection demonstrating information sharing that aided these entities in carrying out their mission.

While the Emergency Customer Protections adopted in D.19-07-015 were primarily geared towards wildfire disasters, Cal Water interprets the language of Ordering Paragraph 12, in the context of the COVID-19 State of Emergency, to require reporting on Cal Water's collaboration with State and local emergency services and the information-sharing that has taken place during the pandemic State of Emergency.

⁸ The Outreach Plan approved by the Water Division in Advice Letter 2351-A includes communications channels that currently are not appropriate, such providing notifications in customer center lobbies and at community assistance events. Cal Water is using an outreach plan modified to reflect current limitations on mobility due to COVID-19.



Cal Water regularly meets with state and local emergency responders and other officials throughout the state. Prior to California's State of Emergency was proclaimed, Cal Water began development of a robust pandemic response plan to protect customers and employees, and the continuity of its business in light of the criticality of its services. Cal Water has since shared its best practices and provided assistance to those communities with fewer planning resources. Cal Water has also been kept informed of State government activities pertaining to the COVID-19 State of Emergency as well through the California Water Association (CWA).

Requested Effective Date

Pursuant to Ordering Paragraphs 11 and 12 of D.19-07-015, this is being filed as a Tier 1 advice letter. Because it is a compliance filing that does not require any changes to Cal Water's tariffs, Cal Water does not request a specific effective date.

Notice

Customer Notice – Customer notice of Tier 1 advice letters is not required under General Order 96-B, General Rule 7.3.1.

Service Lists – In accordance with General Order 96-B, General Rule 4.3 and 7.2 and Water Industry Rule 4.1, a copy of this advice letter will be transmitted ***electronically*** on **March 4, 2021** to competing and adjacent utilities and other utilities or interested parties having requested such notification. ***Please note that, consistent with the Commission's guidelines for service during the COVID-19 pandemic, this advice letter is only being distributed electronically.***

Response or Protest

Anyone may respond to or protest this advice letter. A response supports the filing and may contain information that proves useful to the Commission in evaluating the advice letter. A protest objects to the advice letter in whole or in part and must set forth the specific grounds on which it is based. These grounds are:

- (1) The utility did not properly serve or give notice of the advice letter;
- (2) The relief requested in the advice letter would violate statute or Commission order, or is not authorized by statute or Commission order on which the utility relies;
- (3) The analysis, calculations, or data in the advice letter contain material error or omissions;
- (4) The relief requested in the advice letter is pending before the Commission in a formal proceeding; or
- (5) The relief requested in the advice letter requires consideration in a formal hearing, or is otherwise inappropriate for the advice letter process; or
- (6) The relief requested in the advice letter is unjust, unreasonable, or discriminatory (provided that such a protest may not be made where it would require relitigating a prior order of the Commission.)



CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

Advice Letter 2404, Customer Protections Compliance Filing for 12 Months After COVID-19
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A protest shall provide citations or proofs where available to allow staff to properly consider the protest. A response or protest must be made in writing or by electronic mail and must be received by the Water Division within 20 days of the date this advice letter is filed. The advice letter process does not provide for any responses, protests or comments, except for the utility's reply, after the 20-day comment period. The address for mailing or delivering a protest is:

Tariff Unit, Water Division 3rd floor
California Public Utilities Commission,
505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102
water_division@cpuc.ca.gov

On the same date the response or protest is submitted to the Water Division, the respondent or protestant shall send a copy by mail (or e-mail) to us, addressed to:

Natalie Wales
California Water Service Company
1720 North First Street,
San Jose, California 95112
cwsrates@calwater.com

Cities and counties that need Board of Supervisors or Board of Commissioners approval to protest should inform the Water Division, within the 20-day protest period, so that a late filed protest can be entertained. The informing document should include an estimate of the date the proposed protest might be voted on.

Replies

The utility shall reply to each protest and may reply to any response. Each reply must be received by the Water Division within 5 business days after the end of the protest period, and shall be served on the same day to the person who filed the protest or response. If you have not received a reply to your protest within 10 business days, contact California Water Service Company at 408-367-8200.

CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Natalie Wales".

Natalie Wales
Director of Regulatory Policy and Compliance

cc: Syreeta Gibbs (Public Advocates Office)
PublicAdvocatesWater@cpuc.ca.gov



Antelope Valley District (Los Angeles Region)

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Bakersfield District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Bay Area Region

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Bay Area Region

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Bear Gulch District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Chico District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Dixon District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Dominguez District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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East Los Angeles District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Hermosa-Redondo District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST

PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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Kern River Valley District

ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST

PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

DARLENE STUDDARD, COMMITTEE

MEMBER

Residents Against Water Rates RAW

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ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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ADVICE LETTER FILING MAILING LIST
PER SECTION III (G) OF GENERAL ORDER NO. 96-A

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