

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



September 4, 2024

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

Dear Ms. Wales,

The Water Division of the California Public Utilities Commission has approved California Water Service Company's Advice Letter No. 2526, filed on August 9, 2024, regarding Customer Protections for Wildfire in Kern River Valley service area.

Enclosed is a copy of the advice letter with an effective date of August 9, 2024 for the utility's files.

Please contact Mahdi Jahami at MJ4@cpuc.ca.gov, if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Enclosures



CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

1720 NORTH FIRST STREET
SAN JOSE, CA 95112 • (408) 367-8200

August 9, 2024

Advice Letter No. 2526



To the California Public Utilities Commission:

California Water Service Company (“Cal Water”) respectfully submits this Tier 1 advice letter to comply with Ordering Paragraph 9 of D.19-07-015, *Decision Adopting an Emergency Disaster Relief Program for Electric, Natural Gas, Water and Sewer Utility Customers*, with regard to the impact on Cal Water’s customers of the Borel Fire in the Kern River Valley service area.

Summary

This Tier 1 advice letter confirms Cal Water’s compliance with the emergency customer protections and outreach activities of D.19-07-015 related to the Borel Fire, which started on July 24, 2024, and affected customers located in Cal Water’s Kern River Valley service area.

Background

D.19-07-015 requires water and sewer companies to file a Tier 1 advice letter within 15 days after a state of emergency is proclaimed for an event affecting the water or sewer company. The Tier 1 advice letter is intended to affirm to the California Public Utilities Commission that the company is complying with the emergency customer protections and outreach activities as indicated below:

In D.19-07-015, the Commission provided as follows in Ordering Paragraph 9:

9. In the event the Governor of California or the President of the United States declares a state of emergency because a disaster has either resulted in the loss or disruption of the delivery or receipt of utility service and/or resulted in the degradation of the quality of utility service, all Class-A Water utilities ... shall file a Tier 1 Advice Letter within 15 days of the Governor’s or the President of the United States state of emergency proclamation reporting compliance with implementing this Decision’s mandated emergency customer protections and outreach activities.

The Commission also adopted the following Conclusion of Law relevant to Ordering Paragraph 9:

25. It is reasonable to require the water and sewer corporations, as identified in Conclusion of Law 2, to file a Tier 1 advice letter with the Commission’s Water Division within 15 days of a governor’s state of emergency proclamation and/or a presidential state of emergency demonstrating implementation of the following emergency customer protections: (1) activation of their CEMA [Catastrophic Event Memo



Account] effective to the time of the declaration of emergency; (2) make insurance claims on all costs and expenses incurred as a result of the fires, and credit insurance payments to their CEMA; (3) work cooperatively with affected customers to resolve unpaid bills, and minimize disconnections for non-payment; (4) waive reconnection or facilities fees for affected customers and suspend deposits for affected customers who must reconnect to the system; (5) provide reasonable payment options to affected customers; and (5) [sic] waive bills for victims who lost their homes or if their homes are rendered uninhabitable; and (6) [sic] 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.

Discussion

On July 30, 2024, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Proclamation of Emergency regarding the Borel Fire, which started on July 24, 2024 in the Sequoia National Forest.¹ As a result, approximately 200 customers of Cal Water in its Kern River Valley service area were subject to mandatory evacuation requirements for three days.

Consistent with Ordering Paragraph 9 and Conclusion of Law 25 of D.19-07-015, Cal Water stipulates as follows:

1. Activation of the CEMA (Catastrophic Event Memo Account);
 - For the Borel Fire, Cal Water activated its CEMA via a letter to Executive Director Rachel Thompson on August 2, 2024.
2. Make insurance claims on all costs and expenses incurred as a result of the event, and credit insurance payments to CEMA;
 - For the Borel Fire, if Cal Water determines that there have been losses related to this event, Cal Water will file insurance claims as appropriate. Any funds received as a result of such insurance claims will be credited to the CEMA.
3. Work cooperatively with affected customers to resolve unpaid bills and minimize disconnections for non-payment;
 - Cal Water works cooperatively with all customers who have difficulty paying their bills to address overdue balances.
4. Waive reconnection or facilities fees for affected customers and suspend deposits for affected customers who must reconnect to the system;
 - For customers who may have difficulty paying their bills as a result of the wildfire, Cal Water will waive reconnection fees. Cal Water does not require customer deposits.
5. Provide reasonable payment options to affected customers; and

¹ <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Legal-Affairs/Documents/Proclamations/7.30.24-Borel-Fire-SOE.pdf>.



- Cal Water has various payment options available to all customers, and will ensure that those plans are offered and adjusted as needed to take into account the needs of customers affected by this event.
6. Waive bills for victims who lost their homes or if their homes were rendered uninhabitable.
 - No homes were lost or rendered uninhabitable as a result of the Borel Fire.
 7. Authorize a pro rata waiver of any fixed element of a water bill for the time the home is uninhabitable, even if the reason for it being uninhabitable is not loss of water service.
 - Cal Water is providing a pro rata credit to the approximately 740 customers in the Bodfish area who were subject to a mandatory evacuation.
 8. Customer outreach regarding emergency disaster relief program.
 - Cal Water is providing information about its emergency relief protections to customers in compliance with Commission requirements.²

Cal Water will submit the required follow-up advice letters twelve months after the event.

Requested Effective Date

This is being submitted pursuant to General Order 96-B, Water Industry Rule 7.3.1(3), as modified by Resolution W-4664, is a Tier 1 advice letter. This compliance filing does not require any changes to Cal Water's tariffs, so an effective date is not requested.

Notice

Customer Notice – This is a Tier 1 compliance filing under Water Industry Rule 7.3.1(3) of General Order 96-B. Water Industry Rule 3.2 indicates that this kind of Tier 1 filing does not require customer notice.

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 electronically transmitted on **August 9, 2024**, to competing and adjacent utilities and other utilities or interested parties having requested such notification.

Response or Protest

Anyone may respond to or protest this advice letter. When submitting a response or protest, please include the utility name and advice letter number in the subject line. 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 In compliance with D.19-07-015, Cal Water submitted and received approval for its Emergency Disaster Relief Program in Advice Letter 2351-A.



CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

Advice Letter 2526, Wildfire Customer Protections in KRV - Compliance Filing

Page 5

- (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 such a protest may not be made where it would require relitigating a prior order of the Commission.)

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 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 Cal Water at the following address:

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

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

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 and ask for the Rates Department.



CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

Advice Letter 2526, Wildfire Customer Protections in KRV - Compliance Filing
Page 6

CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY

/s/

Natalie D. Wales
Director of Rates

Enclosures

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



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
P.O.Box 3701
Wofford Heights, CA 93285

JEREMY CALLIHAN
**Department of Water Resources Safe
Drinking Water Program**
1416 Ninth St, Rm. 816
Sacramento, CA 95814
jeremy.callihan@water.ca.gov

**Department of Water Resources Safe
Drinking Water Program**
1416 Ninth St, Rm. 816
Sacramento, CA 95814

ROB BENSON
P.O.Box 1557
Kernville, CA 93238
rcbenso@earthlink.net

ONLY FOR SERVICE AREA MAPS:

BLAIR KNOX, EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kern County LAFCO
5300 Lennox Ave, Suite 303
Bakersfield, CA 93309
eo@kernlafco.org