

The Utility Reform Network, a San Francisco-based organization that's one of PG&E's loudest critics, has expressed skepticism of the safety shut-off program. It told the San Francisco Chronicle in May that the corporation's messaging around the initiative indicates it could be used too often—and thus put too many vulnerable people at risk.

Smith says that PG&E isn't taking the power cutoffs lightly, but admitted

Carey said. "The fact is, we've burned five out of five years in our county."

PRICE AND POWER OF MONOPOLY

It has not been a quiet year at the California Public Utilities Commission. Since the Camp Fire, enraged protestors have shown up at meetings to demand PG&E be dismantled as a for-profit corporation. These critics have been quick to remind commissioners that in 2017, a San Francisco jury found PG&E guilty of six felonies linked to the San Bruno gas pipe explosion, which killed eight people and convinced a judge to put the utility on federal, court-monitored probation.

"I think the working people of California are fed up with the continued death and destruction caused by the utilities, by PG&E," Steve Zeltzer of United Public Workers for Action told commissioners in November. "The utility executives should be in jail for what they've done. They've lied to the people of California... And the utility should be a public utility. Take the profits out of utilities. The public should control it, not these profiteers who don't give a damn about what they've done."

To some extent, that message was heard. A month later, the commission started the formal process of reviewing whether PG&E should be broken up into regional subsidiaries or restructured as a state-owned company. While that review continues, the city of San Francisco is separately exploring whether it can take over control of PG&E's power distribution within its limits. PG&E has publicly warned that any forced restructuring would likely result in higher utility bills for the average Californian.

Frank Gevurtz, a professor at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento who specializes in antitrust litigation, says the company is probably correct in that assumption. Gevurtz also notes that while PG&E is a for-profit entity under its state corporate structure, it also falls into what California law defines as "a natural monopoly." He explains that,

"POWER PLAY"
continued on page 18

"I think the working people of California are fed up with the continued death and destruction caused by the utilities, by PG&E."

Steve Zeltzer,
United Public Workers for Action, speaking to
California Public Utilities Commission

it can be "a double-edge sword" with unintended consequences.

For county officials such as Carey, who have worked to not only lessen the impacts of the shut-offs, but also to provide residents real-time digital maps of spreading fires and open escape routes, PG&E's predicament is part of the hotter, drier California confronting all emergency agencies.

"We were already doing a lot of work before the blackouts started,"

HARD ROCK LINEUP



**THUNDER FROM
DOWN UNDER**
AUGUST 15-17 | VINYL



HOLIDAE HOUSE
AUGUST 24 | VINYL



**TERRY PARRETT:
HYPNOTIST**
AUGUST 30 & 31 | VINYL

CENTER

DJ'S EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY

PURCHASE TICKETS AT [HARDROCKCASINOLAKETAHOE.COM](https://www.hardrockcasino.com/lake-tahoe)

HARD ROCK
**SOUND
WAVES**
LAKE TAHOE

LAKE TAHOE'S ONLY POOL SOCIAL!
EVERY SATURDAY

MUST BE 21+



LAKE TAHOE

[HardRockCasinoLakeTahoe.com](https://www.HardRockCasinoLakeTahoe.com)

50 HIGHWAY 50
STATELINE, NV 89449

844.588.ROCK
#MADEFORMUSIC
@HRHCLAKETAHOE