
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 710 (Irwin) - Electrical corporations: resiliency planning: microgrid projects

Version: June 25, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: E., U. & C. 13 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would require large electrical corporations, upon request, to collaborate with local governments, tribal governments, or community choice aggregators (CCAs) in their service areas on resiliency planning, and to provide those entities with access to specified data — including electrical distribution equipment data, transmission and distribution circuit data, and grid hardening plans, along with any other information the PUC directs — for the purposes of planning potential microgrid projects serving critical facilities.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) estimates ongoing costs of about \$244,000 (ratepayer funds) to conduct a new rulemaking in order to determine the appropriate data to be disclosed per the requirements of the bill, how the data should be shared, and identify the recipients. Additionally, implementation of this bill may require the CPUC to monitor the data management and use by the recipients on an annual basis to ensure compliance with data privacy laws.

Background: Microgrids are small, self-contained electricity systems — typically combining distributed energy resources, storage, and demand response, though they can be as simple as a diesel generator serving a hospital — that can disconnect from the larger grid and keep critical customer loads powered during outages, making them attractive to customers seeking reliability and resiliency amid wildfire, flooding, and similar threats. SB 1339 (Stern, 2018) directed the CPUC and CEC to facilitate microgrid commercialization, and the CPUC has run an open proceeding (R.19-09-009) since September 2019. Among its actions, the CPUC required large electrical corporations to modify net energy metering tariffs so storage can charge from the grid ahead of deenergization events, and adopted rules requiring those utilities to collaborate with local and tribal governments on resiliency information for critical facilities and to educate them on interconnection processes for solar, storage, and microgrid projects. The same June 2020 decision (D.20-06-017) directed the utilities to build an access-restricted data portal giving local and tribal governments grid data while protecting customer privacy and grid security, and, under Track 2, directed PG&E, SDG&E, and SCE to jointly develop a statewide Microgrid Incentive Program with a \$200 million ratepayer-funded budget for clean energy microgrids serving vulnerable communities and testing new technologies and regulatory approaches.

Some of the interest in microgrids stems from deenergization events. Utility infrastructure — downed lines, arcing, and conductor contact with vegetation — has ignited several of California's catastrophic wildfires, with risk compounded by drought and bark beetle-driven tree mortality that added fuel to the landscape. Electrical

corporations have responded by proactively shutting off distribution and sometimes transmission lines, known as Public Safety Power Shutoffs, during high-wind, dry-condition days. Despite community opposition and concerns, the CPUC acknowledged utilities' deenergization authority under Public Utilities Code §451 and §399.2 while adopting protocols governing who is notified, when, by whom, and how customer groups are identified; those protocols require work groups including representatives of the access and functional needs population and have expanded over time to require needs assessments, coordination plans for that population, identification of critical infrastructure, and coordination with public safety partners.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. Define terms. In particular:

- a. "Access and functional needs population" would have the same meaning as defined in Section 8593.3 of the Government Code.
- b. "Critical circuit" would mean an electrical circuit that supplies electricity to one or more critical facilities or to critical infrastructure, as reported to the commission by each electrical corporation.
- c. "Critical customer" would mean a customer of an electrical corporation receiving a medical baseline allowance pursuant to Section 739 who resides within a high fire-threat district or vulnerable transmission area, or a customer of a local publicly owned electric utility enrolled in a life support discount program who resides within a high fire-threat district or vulnerable transmission area.
- d. "Critical facilities and critical infrastructure" would mean facilities and infrastructure that are essential to health and public safety that require assistance and advance planning to ensure their resiliency during a deenergization event, as reported to the commission by the Office of Emergency Services based on consultations with local governments, including, but not limited to, facilities and infrastructure within the United States Department of Homeland Security's critical infrastructure sectors.
- e. "Deenergization event" would have the same meaning as defined in Section 8385.
- f. "High fire-threat district" would mean a geographic area identified by the commission as a Tier 2 or Tier 3 fire-threat area, where there is an elevated or extreme risk for fires caused by electrical infrastructure igniting and spreading rapidly.
- g. "Project" would mean a microgrid project that meets the resiliency needs of a local government, joint powers authority, or special district and may include microgrid projects that meet the resiliency needs for critical facilities and critical infrastructure, critical customers, or customers from an access and functional needs population that can operate disconnected from the distribution system for a predetermined period of time.

- h. “Resiliency” would mean the ability to mitigate and recover from an electrical service disruption using generation resources that maintain all or essential electrical service to customers, including critical facilities and critical infrastructure. Electrical service disruptions would include, but not be limited to, emergencies, natural disasters, planned or unplanned electricity outages, or other events that may cause disruptions to important public services.
2. Require large electrical corporations to collaborate with local governments, tribal governments, or community choice aggregators within its service area to support resiliency planning, including identifying critical facilities that may be vulnerable to repeated deenergization events.
3. Require large electrical corporations to, consistent with privacy, customer consent, confidentiality, and electrical grid security laws, provide local governments, tribal governments, and community choice aggregators with access to data, including electrical distribution equipment data, transmission and distribution circuit data, grid hardening plans, and other information as directed by the CPUC, to support resiliency planning by local governments and tribal governments to ensure the local governments, tribal governments, and community choice aggregators are able to plan potential microgrid projects to support critical facilities.
 - a. Authorize the CPUC to require large electrical corporations to share this information in an aggregated and anonymized form to protect customer privacy and electrical grid security.
 - b. Require large electrical corporations to respond to data requests within the timelines determined by the CPUC.
4. Provide that no reimbursement would be required pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district would be incurred because this bill would create a new crime or infraction, eliminate a crime or infraction, or change the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

Related Legislation:

SB 453 (Stern, 2025) would require the CPUC to review the status of a ratepayer-funded microgrid incentive program and consider specified actions to direct any available funds to support vulnerable communities affected by deenergization events.

SB 533 (Stern, Chapter 244, Statutes of 2021) required electrical corporations to identify circuits that have frequently been deenergized to mitigate the risk of wildfire and the measures taken to reduce the need for future deenergization of those circuits.

AB 1144 (Friedman, Chapter 934, Statutes of 2019) required a percentage of funding from the Self Generation Incentive Program (SGIP) was directed to energy storage and other DER for customers that operate critical facilities or critical infrastructure serving communities in high fire threat districts.

SB 700 (Wiener, Chapter 839, Statutes of 2018) authorized the CPUC to extend collections up to \$166 million in ratepayer funds annually for the SGIP to December 31, 2024.

SB 1339 (Stern, Chapter 566, Statutes 2018) required the CPUC and CEC to facilitate the commercialization of microgrids.

AB 1637 (Low, Chapter 658, Statutes of 2016) doubled the annual funding authorization for SGIP and revised and extended the net energy metering program for fuel cells by five years.

Staff Comments: The CPUC notes that this bill would duplicate existing requirements established by the Commission in Rulemaking 19-09-009, which directed the utilities to grant local and tribal governments access to data necessary to plan for microgrid development opportunities. Decision 20-06-017 required the utilities to create a data portal which includes information demonstrating the utility's planned work/grid investments (including project locations and timelines) and data reflecting high fire threat districts (including impacted electrical infrastructure and weather-related factors that led to a de-energization decision from each prior public safety power shutoff event). The CPUC states that the D.20-06-017 portal was carefully designed in response to the problem this bill identifies. The Commission evaluated different options for improving local and Tribal government access to grid data for microgrid planning and selected an approach that balanced multiple competing concerns. According to the CPUC, AB 710 would require the Commission to revisit that balance without any showing that the existing framework has failed.

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