

Community Resource Project testifies before the California Public Utilities Commission

With high rates of shut-offs among PG&E's low-income customers, the question of "why?" emerges. As energy rates increase, more families struggle to pay their utility bills. Several unfortunate families receive shut-off notices, only to lead to loss, of not only energy, but of hope. At first glance the most pressing issue may appear to be the loss of PG&E, but if one looks further, more pressing issues are revealed. Once a family's PG&E is shut-off, not only are they required to pay-off their current owed balance, but also a re-connection fee. For families that are already struggling to pay their monthly utility bills, additional charges only set them back even further.

Given the economy, Community Resource Project as well as other community groups throughout California urged PG&E to have a shut-off moratorium, in order to avoid the large number of shut-offs and expensive deposits effecting low-income customers. On December 16, Community Resource Project's Yuliya Zingertal was one of several individuals that testified before the California Public Utilities Commission advocating for the needs of low-income families. Ms. Zingertal noted 2,367 families needing assistance due to shut-off notices in CRP's service area, a 40% increase compared to last year. She stated that the inflated number of families on reduced incomes this year, due to rising unemployment, is a call to help California's families, and not increase their costs even more. Many families already contribute as much as 19% of their income to energy bills. "Given that PG&E has the highest rate of shutoffs in the state...we should be focusing on how to mitigate the strain families are facing under current rates," stated Zingertal. In response, PG&E agreed to a shut-off moratorium through the holidays for three weeks, as well as discontinuing the re-connection fees for low-income customers through 2011.

Community Resource Project is a member of ACCES, Association of California Community and Energy Services, and works year-round to help low-income families catch up on their energy payments or reduce their energy consumption through home weatherization. CRP, as well as other community groups across the state of California, continue to assist people struggling with energy costs through programs such as the Home Energy Assistance Program, and home weatherization. For more information on these programs, [visit us](#).