



PG&E's Focus on Public Safety: December 2015 Gas Outage in Discovery Bay and Byron Communities

On December 27, 2015, PG&E identified pressure variations on natural gas equipment serving Discovery Bay and parts of Byron. Out of an abundance of caution, PG&E proactively shut off gas service to customers in these communities. Immediately after shutting the gas off, PG&E made the needed repairs and installed new equipment to safely get the gas back on within 24 hours.

PG&E sincerely appreciates the patience and understanding from each of its customers during the outage. If customers directly affected by the outage have questions, please call (800) 743-5000.

What Happened

PG&E stores natural gas in its three owned and operated underground natural gas storage facilities throughout California. During the winter season, when natural gas demand is highest, gas is withdrawn from underground storage facilities to meet the needs of customers. Gas storage also allows PG&E to maintain lower and more consistent gas prices throughout the year because PG&E purchases natural gas during times of the year when it's more affordable. The company then stores the gas and uses it when prices for gas are typically more volatile and higher in other parts of the country.

When gas is stored in the underground facilities, it naturally accumulates moisture. PG&E uses a process to remove the moisture from the gas before it enters the rest of the system. On December 27, when withdrawing gas from an underground storage facility, a valve used in the process to remove this moisture was left open when it should have been closed, due to human error. The cold temperatures combined with moisture left in the gas, and a pressure reduction caused hydrates (likely ice) in the pressure control equipment at a regulator station, causing pressure variations. The regulator station reduces the pressure to the distribution system serving homes and businesses. As a result, gas pressure varied and staff was alerted. Out of an abundance of caution, PG&E shut off gas to about 5,600 customers until the situation could be resolved.

PG&E also formed a team of internal and external experts to look into the cause of the issue. The team came up with action items, including equipment upgrades and training. Specifically, a backup heating element was installed on pressure control equipment to prevent icing. PG&E also updated procedures and provided training for operators. To date, nearly all of the recommendations have been completed or are in-process.

Supporting Our Customers

While the cold weather (29 degrees Fahrenheit) impacted the gas valve, it also affected our customers relying on gas-fueled heaters. To provide options for customers to stay warm and comfortable during the outage, two warming centers were opened at Timberlake Middle School and Discovery Bay Community Center.

PG&E also provided customers with an adjustment on their energy statement and contributed \$17,000 to the Town of Discovery Bay. PG&E contributed \$5,000 to the Byron School District and \$5,000 to the Town of Discovery Bay for the warming centers.

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