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Sebastopol crowd decries PG&E's SmartMeters

By LORI A. CARTER
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Published: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 3:00 a.m.
Last Modified: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 9:06 p.m.

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Judith Iam of Forestville said she was dismayed when the PUC's Marzia Zafar suggested that those with health and safety concerns write to the utility.

Zafar said the PUC has received about 600 complaints about the meters, fewer than 1 percent of the 5.5 million installed statewide. Most of those complaints, she said, involved meter inaccuracies not health concerns.

The PUC has appointed an independent investigator with no ties to PG&E to look into the complaints, she said.

“In response to this less than one percent, we've hired someone to look at it to make sure that it's accurate, that it's safe, that the complaints are addressed,” Zafar said. “It's like proven innocent until guilty. We can't presume that PG&E or the manufacturer or the SmartMeter is this terrible thing, unless we can look at it and someone has told us that something is wrong with it or something is right with it.

“What should we do?”

“Call for a moratorium on behalf of the public safety, of course,” said Iam, who was backed by applause from the audience.

Sebastopol landlord Deborah Tavares said her tenants have health concerns about the meters here and at her properties in Southern California. Because of her complaints, PG&E put her properties on a “deferral list” for installation later.

She challenged the PUC to indemnify landlords against any health problems tenants may experience, since the agency has apparently determined that the meters aren't harmful.

“There is no evidence to prove or disprove that there are no health issues associated with these meters,” she said. “I don't want my tenants to get sick.”

The PUC representatives said they would look into such a letter and get back to Tavares within a week.

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