

Wildfire Survivors, Consumer and Environmental Groups Slam State Report for Letting Utilities Off the Hook for Deadly Fires, Says Consumer Watchdog

Street Insider

A coalition of twenty-three organizations — including wildfire survivors, consumer advocates, and environmental groups — today blasted the California Earthquake Authority’s (CEA) wildfire report for failing to hold utilities accountable for their role in causing some of the most destructive fires in state history.

In a sign-on letter to legislative leaders, the groups write that the report “remarkably avoids placing blame on utilities whose misconduct has caused a substantial share of the major fires over the last decade,” despite overwhelming evidence linking utility failures to some of the deadliest and most destructive wildfires in state history.

Instead of confronting that record, the coalition warns, the CEA report’s recommendations “skew toward absolving utilities of responsibility and placing burdens on ratepayers, wildfire survivors, taxpayers and consumers.” The report even proposes eliminating punitive damages — reserved for cases of malice, oppression, or fraud — raising a fundamental question: what incentive do utilities have to prevent fires if they are not held accountable when they willfully cause harm?

Read the letter.

“The report gets it exactly backwards,” said Jamie Court, president of Consumer Watchdog. “It limits the

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rights of wildfire survivors while letting utilities off the hook, increasing the risk of more catastrophic fires and forcing the public to pay for corporate failures. Any real solution should reduce future fires by holding utilities accountable when their equipment causes devastation.”

The coalition warned that weakening accountability would make future disasters more likely — not less — by removing incentives for utilities to maintain equipment, invest in safety, and operate responsibly.

At the same time, utilities with disastrous safety records are posting billions in profits while Californians pay some of the highest electricity rates in the nation. The groups argue reform should focus on curbing excessive profits and preventing fires—not limiting wildfire survivors’ right to recovery.

“Nowhere does the report even mention the fact that far from being economically stressed, Edison and PG&E made among their highest profits in years in 2025,” the groups wrote. “Edison’s net profits were \$4.46 billion, while PG&E’s were \$2.59 billion. Despite reportedly starting the deadly and catastrophic Eaton Fire, Edison gave its CEO, Pedro Pizarro, a 20% raise to \$16.6 million.”

The coalition is urging lawmakers to reject the CEA’s recommendations and instead pursue policies that hold utilities accountable, protect survivors, and reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfires.

“When utilities with disastrous safety records post huge profits while Californians pay some of the highest electricity rates in the nation, reform should focus on curbing excessive profits and waste - not limiting wildfire survivors’ right to recovery,” the letter concluded.

The groups signing the letter include: 350 Bay Area Action, Bay Area-System Change not Climate Change, Center for Biological Diversity, Consumer Attorneys of California, Consumer Federation of California, Consumer Watchdog, Courage California, Eaton Fire Residents United, Environmental Working Group, Every Fire Survivor’s Network, Fairness for Fire Victims, Food & Water Watch, Greenpeace USA, Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles, Protect Our Communities Foundation, SanDiego350, San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility Bay, Santa Cruz Climate Action Network, SoCal 350 Climate Action, Sunflower Alliance, United Policyholders, and the Utility Wildfire Survivor Coalition.

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