

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF
CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking on the Commission's
Proposed Policies and Programs Governing post-2003
Low-Income Assistance Programs.

Rulemaking 04-01-006

COMMENTS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY
AND ENERGY SERVICES ON
THE STANDARDIZATION TEAM'S PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE
LOW INCOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY STATEWIDE POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES MANUAL FILED ON NOVEMBER 1, 2005

ACCES commends the Assigned Commissioner and Administrative Law Judge for the excellent progress made in ensuring an opportunity for thoughtful consideration and public input on the Standardization Team's proposed modifications of the Low Income Energy Assistance (LIEE) program.

As discussed in the Standardization Team workshops, ACCES has a "lingering concern" about an aspect of the procedures for Natural Gas Appliance Testing (NGAT) which disqualifies a significant number low income dwellings from LIEE.

Policies and Procedures Subsection 10.3 presents the general protocols followed in the course of NGAT. Subsection 10.3.2, "Pre-Weatherization Evaluation," describes certain conditions which "cannot be corrected within the scope of the program" and, thus, may disqualify a low income dwelling from receiving LIEE services. Our concern focuses on the "Combustion and Ventilation Air (CVA) Evaluations" component of the Pre-Weatherization Evaluation.

The CVA evaluation seeks to determine if there is sufficient volume of air available for the appliance to properly ventilate. The most common NGAT problem we find is a heater that is too large for the room it is in. Most owner occupied low income

homes were built 40 to 50 years ago and may not meet today's standards. Many of these dwellings fail the CVA test because the heater is in a small hallway or other small room where there is simply insufficient space to provide the volume of air necessary to pass the CVA test.

A currently allowed method to fix this problem is to cut grills into the wall to let in more air from another room. But often this is not possible and the home is disqualified. Possible remedies to that situation are to install a smaller heater in the room, or to install a Direct Vent Furnace, or to relocate the furnace to a new location in the dwelling. But currently these options are not "within the scope of the program," and are not allowed.

TELACU and Maravilla report that last year they rejected a combined total of over two thousand customers due to this type of CVA failure. And when a dwelling in the SoCalGas territory fails the CVA, it is also disqualified from receiving any SCE LIEE services, including refrigerators, window coolers, and relamping. In discussions in the Standardization Team workshops we learned this is a systemwide problem for all gas utilities.

While ACCES believes the program should be modified to remedy this situation, we do not want this issue to delay the approval of the revised Policies and Procedures manual. But we wish to highlight the issue as a continuing concern. We think this issue would be appropriate for consideration by a newly formed Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a subcommittee of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB).

There has been much discussion of the future role, if any, of the Standardization Team. We suggest the Standardization Team be dissolved and the LIOB establish a

Technical Advisory Committee consisting of, as described in statute, low income service providers, energy utility representatives, consumer organizations, and commission staff, to assist the board and deal with these sorts of issues. We recommend the Commission, as necessary, transfer the disbanded Standardization Team's assignments to the Technical Advisory Committee. The recommendations of the TAC will be presented to the LIOB, which would then makes its final recommendations to the Commission.

While many details of such a TAC must be worked out, we believe such a framework would provide a forum to deal with program problems and modifications, would preserve the “institutional memory” of the Standardization Team, and would bring the LIOB more directly into the issues affecting the LIEE, thus making it more effective as an advisory body to the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

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