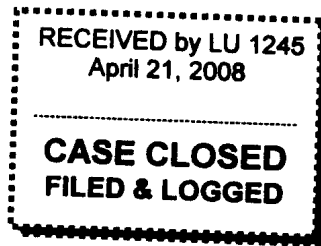




PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY  
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MARGARET A. SHORT, CHAIRMAN  
 DECISION  
 LETTER DECISION  
 PRE-REVIEW REFERRAL

## REVIEW COMMITTEE



7.1: A DML given to a GC Working Foreman B, Martin Svc. Center, for work procedure errors resulting to a significant damage to the customer's property was given appropriately. Closed without adjustment.

**IBEW**



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF  
 ELECTRICAL WORKERS, AFL-CIO  
 LOCAL UNION 1245, I.B.E.W.  
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 VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95696  
 (707) 452-2700  
 BOB CHOATE, SECRETARY

### Pre-Review Committee No. 17581 General Construction – Gas – Martin Service Center

Durla Kelleher  
 Company Member  
 Local Investigating Committee

Hunter Stern  
 Union Member  
 Local Investigating Committee

#### Subject of the Grievance

This grievance concerns a Decision Making Leave given a Working Foreman B for work procedure errors resulting in starting a fire in a customer's garage and house.

#### Facts of the Case

On May 3, 2007 the grievant was assigned to uprate a gas main. Proper procedures require each customer service tee to be exposed and the service isolated prior to performing the uprate. The crew failed to do this at one of the residences. The increased service pressure during the uprate caused a fire at the water heater which spread to the surrounding area in the garage. The crew also failed to place a gauge on the low pressure side of the uprate; this was not done because the crew did not remove the plate covering the service tee and the end of the main.

The grievant acknowledged that had he removed the steel plates as required, he would have caught his mistake that caused the fire, and would have been able to visually see what needed to be done. He left the plates in place because the job was on a narrow street and leaving the plates in place allowed for smoother flow of traffic. The grievant also indicated that the Field Engineer drawing of the facilities was confusing because it appeared as if the service was coming off a different main.

The Supervisor and another employee began putting out the fire with extinguishers from the truck, until the Fire Department arrived. The amount of damage exceeded \$50,000. There was media coverage of this event.

The grievant has been a Working Foreman for about 15 years, has directed all types of gas work including Rule 20, New Business, and all types of main replacements including uprates. He had no active discipline at the time the DML was given.

Discussion

At the outset, the Union and grievant agree that discipline is warranted, however, it is their opinion that DML is too severe given the grievant's long service and excellent work record. Further the grievant took full responsibility for what occurred and was truthful about it during the investigation. Union asked that the DML be reduced to a Written Reminder.

Company responded that this was a serious event causing substantial damage to a customer's property and all of this could have been avoided by simply following the prescribed work procedures which the grievant knew well. While it is true the grievant has a good work record and was forthcoming with respect to his involvement, the consequence of his actions cannot be minimized.

Review Committee Decision 11575 addresses switching errors and how the disciplinary level is determined. While this case, does not involve a switching error, it does involve unsafe work procedures in the Gas Department that caused considerable damage to a customer property and had negative media coverage. To that extent, the RC Decision may be relevant where it states:

"The parties agree that generally a Written Reminder is the appropriate level of discipline for a switching error. However, a Decision Making Leave may be appropriate based on the nature of an error and/or its effect (i.e. an error that results in a significant outage, injury, or adverse publicity to the Company and/or involves dishonesty). It is understood that the above applies to employees who have no active discipline at the time of the switching error."

Decision

Based on RC 11575 and the significant damage to the customers' property the DML was for just cause. This case is closed without adjustment.

*Margaret Short*

Margaret A. Short, Chairman  
Review Committee

4/16/08  
Date

*Bob Choate*

Bob Choate, Secretary  
Review Committee

4/16/08  
Date