

Utility fire safety rules took 10 years

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

For 10 days in October 2007, wildfires riding hot Santa Ana winds swept across Southern California, forcing nearly 1 million people to flee and killing 10. When the ashes cooled, investigators found that many of the blazes had been caused by electrical lines swaying or falling in the wind.

So state regulators resolved to tighten fire safety rules for electric utilities. They quickly passed new regulations for Southern California and began developing rules for the rest of the state.

It would take 10 years.

On Nov. 8 of this year, exactly a month after the most destructive wildfire event in California history began sweeping across the Wine Country, the California Public Utilities Commission finally released its proposal.

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