

POWER COMPANY ACTS ON AMATEUR COMPLAINTS

After prodding by the FCC, Pacific Gas & Electric Company says it's making headway in mitigating long-standing power-line noise complaints from several Northern California amateurs. Not all complaints have been resolved, however, and several new ones have sprung up in the interim.

The hams involved in the initial complaints had been unsuccessful getting the West Coast power company to investigate their reports of severe noise, so they turned to the ARRL and the FCC for help. In late November, the FCC wrote PG&E to remind the utility of its obligation to rectify equipment problems that cause harmful radio interference. The FCC requested that the company correct the problems "within a reasonable time" and report back.

The complainants were four hams in the Los Gatos/San Jose area and another in Berkeley. ARRL Lab Supervisor Ed Hare, W1RFI--the League's point man for RF interference issues--says the League has since received reports from additional hams in PG&E's service area. Those complaints were forwarded to PG&E for resolution.

In a letter to the FCC, PG&E Manager for Operations and Construction Robert Lipscomb summarized progress in clearing up the initial complaints. The work included replacing poles, guy wires, insulators, and transformers as well as installing radio/television interference "clips" at one site and re-routing a service drop at another. Lipscomb conceded, however, that the utility still has additional work to do. PG&E personnel continue to work with Hare in resolving the complaints. Hare says not all of the five hams who complained have been contacted by PG&E. One still has severe interference, he says, and another has intermittent interference.

Some interference has been cleared up, however. Lipscomb told that in at least one of the five original cases, "the customer has been contacted and he is satisfied."

The FCC's Part 15 rules obligate utilities and others that fall under their provisions to not cause harmful interference to licensed services and to cease operating a device that's causing harmful interference upon FCC notification. The ARRL Technical Information Service offers more information on how to deal with power line interference at <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/rfi-elec.html>. Amateurs suffering from interference believed to be emanating from power generation or transmission facilities may contact Ed Hare, W1RFI, 860-594-0318; rfi@arrl.org.