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Union of PG&E Professionals Response to Bankruptcy Filing: “We are Part of the Solution, Not Part of the Problem”

OAKLAND, January 28, 2019- The union representing 3,700 Professional and Technical Employees at Pacific Gas & Electric Company responded to the Company’s bankruptcy filing today, stressing the importance of maintaining a stable, highly skilled and experienced workforce that is committed to providing a safe utility, continuing wildfire prevention efforts, and achieving renewable energy goals. The Engineers and Scientists of California, Local 20, IFPTE (ESC Local 20) said that the bankruptcy filing must not be allowed to impact the important safety and environmental programs which they are carrying out.

The Union has engaged bankruptcy counsel and will make its own filings in bankruptcy court.

“Every day, we are working to make the electrical grid greener and safer. We are studying and implementing new ways to reduce wildfire risk, like trimming trees, installing insulated cables, and under-grounding equipment. At the same time, we connect solar homes, wind farms, battery storage and other kinds of renewable power to the grid,” said John Mader, an Electrical Planning Engineer with the utility and President of ESC Local 20, IFPTE.

“This bankruptcy was driven by California’s liability laws and that will have to be dealt with as a financial situation, but we can’t let it stop the safety work that we are doing. We only have a few months until fire season starts again, and there are a lot of projects in the pipeline that need to continue.”

Joel Foster, an Associate Distribution Engineer at PG&E and Secretary-Treasurer of the local union, added: “We all feel terrible for the losses from the wildfires. The employees of PG&E did not start those fires, and we have worked very hard to restore power to the people and communities who were affected. While PG&E may have to pay costs, it wouldn’t be fair if that comes from the pockets of employees.

“We hope the bankruptcy allows for a fair settlement of PG&E’s liabilities and debts, without impacting the workers who keep the lights and the heat on. We just want to keep doing our jobs. There is a lot of work to do, and if we don’t keep working then risks will increase.”

Additionally, the Union has already filed to become a party to the CPUC proceeding on PG&E Safety Culture.

ESC Local 20, IFPTE represents more than 3,700 professionals at PG&E in Northern California from Bakersfield to Eureka, San Francisco to Auburn. Engineers, estimators, mappers, project managers, and many more make up the 200+ classifications that do the important work to maintain and modernize the systems and keep the public utility safe. ESC Local 20 is the second largest union at PG&E.

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