SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS
Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 710	**Hearing Date:**	6/24/2026
Author:	Irwin		
Version:	6/11/2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	**Fiscal:**	Yes
Consultant:	Nidia Bautista		

SUBJECT: Electrical corporations: microgrid projects

DIGEST: This bill requires a large electrical corporation, upon request, to collaborate with local governments, tribal governments, or community choice aggregators (CCAs) within its service area to identify critical circuits and microgrid projects.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Requires that a statute that limits the right of access to the meetings of public bodies or the writings of public officials and agencies be adopted with findings demonstrating the interest protected by the limitation and the need for protecting that interest. (Article 1, §3 of the California Constitution)

2) Establishes and vests the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) with regulatory authority over public utilities, including electrical corporations. (Article 12 of the California Constitution)

3) Requires the CPUC, in consultation with the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (also known as the California Energy Commission (CEC)) and California the Independent System Operator (CAISO), to take specified actions to facilitate the commercialization of microgrids for distribution customers of large electrical corporations, including developing microgrid service standards necessary to meet state and local permitting requirements and developing methods to reduce barriers for microgrid deployment without shifting costs between ratepayers. (Public Utilities Code §8370 *et seq*.)

4) Requires an electrical corporation to construct, maintain, and operate its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that will minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by those electrical lines and equipment. Requires

each electrical corporation to annually prepare a wildfire mitigation plan and to submit its plan to the CPUC for review and approval, as specified. Following approval, the CPUC is required to oversee an electrical corporation's compliance with the plans. (Public Utilities Code §8386)

This bill:

1) Makes findings and declarations concerning the need to procure energy resources that do not emit greenhouse gas emissions, the impacts of deenergization events, medically vulnerable customers' unique threats to health and safety from the loss of electricity, and the electric utility's responsibility to provide safe and reliable electrical service.

2) Requires a large electrical corporation, upon request, to collaborate with local governments, tribal governments, or CCAs within its service area to identify critical circuits and microgrid projects.

3) Requires large electrical corporations to provide local governments, tribal governments, and CCAs with electrical distribution equipment data, transmission and distribution circuit data, grid hardening plans, and other information requested by those entities to ensure that they are able to plan and develop microgrid projects collaboratively with the large electrical corporations.

4) Requires the large electrical corporation, if a local government, tribal government, or CCAs requests information relating to individual customers, customers' personal information, or customers' locations to provide the information on a confidential basis, and requires the local government, tribal government, or CCA to not use the information for any other purpose than planning and developing microgrid projects.

5) Requires a local government, tribal government, or CCA that requests and accepts data to maintain the confidentiality of any information designated as confidential by the large electrical corporation.

6) Includes findings that changes proposed by this bill address a matter of statewide concern rather than a municipal affair and, therefore, apply to all cities, including charter cities.

7) Makes legislative findings that the limitation on the public's right of access to the ensure the safety of the electrical distribution and transmission grid and the constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy of individual customers.

Background

Microgrids. Generally, a microgrid is understood to be a self-contained, small (relative to the electrical grid), electricity system with the ability to manage critical customer resources, disconnect from the electric grid when the need arises, and provide the customer with different levels of critical support. A microgrid can be as simple as a diesel-fuel generator located near a building, such as for a hospital, that is able to provide needed power during an electric power outage. Customers tend to seek reliability and resiliency services from microgrids. In particular, customers may value the desire for sufficient resources both at the utility scale, but also at the local level in order to better manage challenges, such as power outages due to wildfire, flooding, etc. Although each microgrid can vary in component configuration, size, and applications, generally, microgrids are made of a combination of distributed energy resources (DER), energy storage, and demand response capabilities.

Statute directs state energy agencies to facilitate commercialization of microgrids. SB 1339 (Stern, Chapter 566, Statutes of 2018) required the CPUC and CEC to facilitate the commercialization of microgrids. Since September 2019, the CPUC has held an open and active proceeding (R. 19-09-009) with various decisions, and tracks. These include requiring large electrical corporations to adjust their net energy metering tariffs to allow storage devices to charge from the grid during pre-deenergization events. Additionally, the proceeding adopted rules to require large electrical corporations to collaborate with local and tribal governments to provide information about resiliency for critical facilities vulnerable to deenergization events and to educate local and tribal governments on electrical corporations' interconnection processes for solar, storage, and microgrid projects. Under that same decision in June 2020 (D.20-06-017), the CPUC directed the large electrical corporations to develop an access restricted data portal that local and tribal governments can use to gain data about the electrical grid, while protecting customer privacy and security of the electrical grid. Under Track 2 of the proceeding, via CPUC Decision (D. 20-06-017), the CPUC directed Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), and Southern California Edison (SCE) to jointly develop a statewide microgrid incentive program (Microgrid Incentive Program or MIP) with a $200 million budget, collected from ratepayers, to fund clean energy microgrids to support the critical needs of vulnerable communities impacted by grid outages and test new technologies or regulatory approaches to inform future action on microgrids.

Deenergization events. In recent years, California has experienced a number of catastrophic wildfires, including several ignited by electrical utility infrastructure. Electrical equipment, including downed power lines, arcing, and conductor contact

with trees and grass, can act as an ignition source. Risks for wildfires also increased with extended drought and bark beetle infestation that has increased tree mortalities and, as a result, increased the fuel, and risk for wildfires. As a result, electrical corporations have increasingly utilized proactive power shutoffs, deenergization of electric distribution (and sometimes transmission) lines, as a tool to prevent igniting wildfires, particularly during high wind event days with dry ground conditions. Although the use of proactive power shutoffs, coined as Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) were met with opposition and concerns about its use by affected communities, ultimately the CPUC acknowledged electrical corporations' authority to deenergize lines in order to protect public safety, noting this authority in Public Utilities Code §451 and §399.2. However, the CPUC adopted protocols for deenergizing electric lines with a focus on who should receive notice and when, who should be responsible for notification, how different customer groups should be identified. The protocols require electrical corporations to develop work groups that include representatives of the access and functional needs population. As the protocols have evolved over the years, there has been expanded requirements to develop needs assessments and plans to coordinate with identified access and functional needs population, identify critical infrastructure, and coordinate with public safety partners.

Comments

Need for this bill. According to the author:

> California communities continue to face prolonged power outages caused by wildfires, public safety power shutoffs, extreme weather, and other grid reliability challenges. AB 710 helps communities plan microgrid projects to bolster local grid reliability by requiring the utilities, upon request, to collaborate with local governments, tribal governments, and community choice aggregators to identify critical circuits and share necessary grid information. This bill ensures that the local entities responsible for emergency response and community resilience have the information needed to plan effectively, while protecting any sensitive utility information by requiring confidential treatment and limiting its use to microgrid planning.

Proponents seek opportunities for greater collaboration between electric investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and local and tribal governments. The proponents for this bill seek a standardized statutory requirement on IOUs to share localized distribution grid data with localities. While local governments, tribal nations, and CCAs are statutorily tasked with emergency response and climate resilience planning, they allege they lack the technical visibility required to design viable, targeted microgrid projects. They argue that the core regulatory deficiency is that

current law provides no formal, streamlined mechanism for local entities to access circuit-level data, equipment specifications, or planned utility investments. Consequently, public jurisdictions waste finite resources designing microgrid proposals that may be technically unfeasible or redundant with unpublicized utility hardening plans. They believe the statutory omission undermines local self-reliance and delays the deployment of critical backup power systems in high-fire-threat districts.

Opponents point to existing processes for data sharing. The electrical corporations opposed to this bill point to existing processes for data sharing with local governments, specifically CPUC decisions in the microgrid proceeding noted above. They raise concerns that the language in this bill encourages uncoordinated, duplicative, and costly microgrid development rather than targeted, cost-effective deployment. among electrical corporations and local governments, tribal governments, CCAs, and others. They raise concerns that the bill creates significant risks to electrical grid security and violates customer privacy by requiring sharing of their personal identifiable data.

Need for amendments. The author intends for this bill to make explicit in statute a requirements on large electrical corporations to collaborate with local and tribal governments, and CCAs to provide data sharing to support resiliency planning, including potential to locate microgrids that support critical facilities. However, according to the author's office, they intend to require data sharing consistent with state privacy laws, laws regarding customer consent to protect their information, and consistent with security of the electrical grid. As such, *the author and committee members may wish to amend this bill to recast the provisions of this bill to make explicit the CPUC's requirements on large electrical corporations to provide data sharing opportunities with local and tribal governments to support resiliency planning, including potential locations for microgrids to support critical facilities vulnerable to deenergization events; and to remove unnecessary language concerning confidentiality and changes to individual customer's right to privacy.*

Dual Referral. Should this bill be approved by this committee, it will be re-referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 453 (Stern, 2025) requires the CPUC to review the status of a ratepayer-funded microgrid incentive program and consider specified actions to direct any available funds to support vulnerable communities affected by deenergization events. The bill is pending on the Assembly Floor.

SB 533 (Stern, Chapter 244, Statutes of 2021) required electrical corporations to identify circuits that have frequently been deenergized to mitigate the risk of wildfire and the measures taken to reduce the need for future deenergization of those circuits.

AB 1144 (Friedman, Chapter 934, Statutes of 2019) required a percentage of funding from the Self Generation Incentive Program (SGIP) was directed to energy storage and other DER for customers that operate critical facilities or critical infrastructure serving communities in high fire threat districts.

SB 700 (Wiener, Chapter 839, Statutes of 2018) authorized the CPUC to extend collections up to $166 million in ratepayer funds annually for the SGIP to December 31, 2024.

SB 1339 (Stern, Chapter 566, Statutes 2018) required the CPUC and CEC to facilitate the commercialization of microgrids.

AB 1637 (Low, Chapter 658, Statutes of 2016) doubled the annual funding authorization for SGIP and revised and extended the net energy metering program for fuel cells by five years.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

SUPPORT:

California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities

OPPOSITION:

Pacific Gas and Electric Company
San Diego Gas and Electric Company
Southern California Edison

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The California State Association of Counties and League of California Cities states:

> Microgrids improve reliability by allowing critical facilities and essential services to continue receiving power even when the broader electric grid experiences outages, reducing dependence on a single source of electricity and enhancing the resilience of local communities. While microgrids offer significant potential to improve community resilience, local governments often

lack access to the utility system information necessary to identify feasible projects and prioritize investments. Counties may know which critical facilities require reliable backup power, but frequently do not have visibility into the underlying distribution infrastructure needed to determine where microgrids can be most effectively deployed.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The electric IOUs oppose this bill stating it is duplicative of existing requirements in the microgrid proceeding at the CPUC, this bill creates risky data-sharing requirements that undermine customer privacy and grid security and undermine effective grid planning. SDG&E states:

AB 710 diminishes California's established customer privacy framework, which is built on the principle that customer-specific energy usage data may not be disclosed to third parties absent customer authorization. While the bill does not explicitly repeal these protections, it creates new pathways for third parties to request and obtain sensitive grid and customer data, shifting the focus away from customer-driven consent toward a third-party request driven model.

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