

Dear Senator (Name of Committee Chair) and Committee Members.

We're all familiar with the terrible wildfire devastation that has occurred in the towns of Paradise, Berry Creek, Napa, Santa Rosa, Middletown, and many other cities in California. But what do these out of control wildfires have to do with SB 556, and its proposal that all the new 4G/5G installations be removed from oversight by local governments?

Unless you have been paying very close attention to the rollout of these thousands of so-called small cells (short for cell towers), you may not be aware that they allow for small-refrigerator-size cabinets of heavy equipment, sometimes filled with highly flammable material (such as diesel or propane fuel, or lithium batteries), to be hung perilously from utility poles--or placed on the ground--closely spaced throughout our neighborhoods. In news reports of a wildfire sweeping through Santa Rosa last year, it was noted that propane generators were exploding everywhere. I couldn't help but wonder if any of those highly-flammable generators were the ones put in place for new 4G/5G installations?

We already know that overloading utility poles can be the cause of a wildfire that can destroy a community, as happened in Malibu in 2007. <http://archive.vcstar.com/news/accusations-exchanged-over-utility-poles-after-malibu-fire-ep-371956105-%20350885791.html/>

Those poles in Malibu didn't even contain the ticking-time-bomb fuels that the 5G installations have. What if there's an earthquake, car accident, or period of high winds? Even before the rollout of these hundreds of thousands of new "mini cell towers" throughout the U.S., cell towers have often been the source of fires.

You can see numerous articles about dangers of cell tower fires and collapse here [cel](https://www.electronicssilent.spring.com/primers/cell-towers-cell-phones/l-tower-fires-collapsing/)  
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Add to that the very high fire risk caused by the smart meters that the telecoms place on the poles, as part of new 4G/5G installations. As described in a letter by an astute Berkeley resident to Fire Chief Brannigan and several council members,

"I would like to make you aware of an excellent, most comprehensive report (50 pages long) on the fire hazards presented by smart meters, published in July 2019. Here is the link to it: <https://smartmeterharm.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/fire-and-electrical-hazards-report.pdf>

In this report, you will learn of the many reasons smart meters can lead, and have led, to fires. Most notably, unlike analog meters, smart meters do not have surge protectors or any connection to ground (pp. 4-5). When a power surge hits them, which often happens after PG&E re-energizes electrical lines after a power shut-off (more and more common now), these meters can explode and cause a fire (p. 6 and 8). When they explode, they do not prevent the electricity surge from flowing into the building, destroying appliances and often causing fires (p. 5).

Palo Alto (2011), Stockton (2015), and two cities in Ontario, Canada (Summerland in 2014 and Forest in 2013) have all experienced incidents where ‘many smart meters failed simultaneously and spectacularly due to a surge.’(p. 7)”

One city’s response to the extreme fire threat posed by the hundreds of additional smart meters planned to be attached to the 5G installations, is to include flimsy-looking grounding rods on them-- instead of the more logical approach of using analog (non-wireless mechanical meters) instead.

Analogs do not pose these kind of fire risks, and equally important, they do not present ADA violations for people with sensitivities to electromagnetic fields (emfs), which is an ever-increasing percentage of the population. Some emf-sensitive people are already being forced to flee their homes as a result of the new 4G/5G installations, which are already being installed near schools, homes, and health food stores, and on top of senior housing.

Although in some cities ordinances may appear to provide for undergrounding of the dangerous equipment cabinets and/or generators, there are various loopholes that will instead allow utility poles to be heavily loaded with all the equipment, including the highly flammable generators and smart meters.

The overloaded 5G poles are at risk of falling in the strong Diablo winds during high fire hazard periods. Fallen poles could bring down power lines that could start fires in the dry conditions that will prevail this summer and fall.

When worker-whistleblowers have attempted to alert the power companies to the problem of smart meters causing fires, they have been fired. At a CPUC hearing held in Santa Rosa in 2012, a former PG and E worker named Patrick Wrigley testified that he noticed frequent fires related to smart meters, when the power was turned on after

it had been off for a while. When he reported this problem to his superiors, instead of acting to protect the community, they fired him. (His testimony can be seen in the excellent documentary “Take Back Your Power,” available online.)

Firefighters are sometimes provided an exemption from provisions relating to cell towers being put next to or on top of their facilities (AB 57, passed in 2015, and the proposed bill AB 537) because of the proven severe neurological damage they suffered in the past.

According to medical writer Susan Foster, who did a study in 2004 of firefighters who worked at a station with a 2G cell tower placed nearby (a much less powerful frequency than the proposed 4G/5G installations), after five years, all the firefighters studied suffered major neurological damage. Some of the impaired firefighters, on more than one occasion, were unable to find their way around town in response to a 911 call, in the town where they had lived all their lives. (Foster describes her study in a letter dated August 14, 2017, to Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher, Chair of the Appropriations Committee, regarding the proposed bill SB 649.)

Foster also notes in her letter what an invitation to lawsuits against the city or state government this presents.

Why should firefighters be given protections against the extreme harm caused by towers next to or on top of their facilities, but not children, seniors, and other first responders (and all the rest of us)? Fires are not the only kind of major disaster that affects Californians. We need all of our first responders to have all of their mental faculties intact.

It's only a small handful of local governments that have passed very strong protection measures regarding fire safety and the massive EMF pollution from the planned rollout of thousands of small cells (cities as Encinitas, Petaluma, and Mill Valley), but more are on the way. None of these ordinances could have been passed if SB 556 had been in place.

At the very least, cities need to have 500 foot setbacks (preferably 1500 feet) from all homes, schools, senior apartments and senior centers. Ordinances need to require that the installations be kept away from essential businesses and community services, such as health food stores and bus stops, so that people who have emf-related disabilities will have their rights protected to access those services, as required under the American with Disabilities Act.

The telecom companies themselves have strongly opposed any protective provisions in city ordinances. Although FCC rulings have prevented cities from outright banning these ultra dangerous 4G/5G installations (as several cities in California tried unsuccessfully to do), there are many ways that local governments can protect the people in their communities. Please don't prevent local governments taking whatever actions they deem necessary to do that. Don't oppose this bill because we asked you to, oppose it because you want your children, families, and neighbors to have safe and happy lives, free from the impacts of this technology run amok.

Sincerely,

Jenny Miller

Convener, Towards an Internet of Living Beings