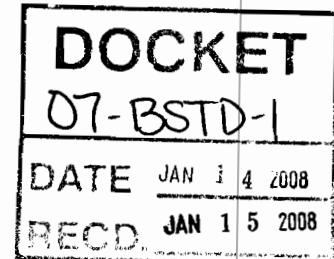


**From:** "Thomas Garrod" <whidbeytomas@gmail.com>  
**To:** <melliott@energy.state.ca.us>, <sbrown@energy.state.ca.us>, <pward@energ...  
**Date:** 1/14/2008 9:07 AM  
**Subject:** is this true

How can the public respond or join the public comment period.  
Are there dates on the agenda for public input?  
What are they?  
Julie Garrod



## State proposes to take control of home temps

**CALIFORNIA** Revision to building standards would make some power conservation mandatory California utilities would control the temperature of new homes and commercial buildings in emergencies with a radio-controlled thermostat, under a proposed state update to building energy efficiency standards.

Customers could not override the thermostats during "emergency events," according to the proposal, part of a 236-page revision to building standards. The document is scheduled to be considered by the California Energy Commission, a state agency, on January 30.

The description does not provide any exception for health or safety concerns. It also does not define what are "emergency events."

During heat waves, customers crank up the air conditioning, putting severe strains on the state's power supply. By giving utilities the power to automatically adjust power demand by reducing air conditioning, the hope is that more severe interruptions, such as rolling blackouts, can be avoided.

However, both the Utility Consumers Action Network, a consumer rights group, and the Riverside County Chapter of the Building Industry Association said customers should be allowed to override the thermostat.

State and utility spokespersons said utilities will provide health and safety exemptions, although that is not specified in the document. Imminent threats of blackouts would qualify as emergency events, they said. Final adoption of the revised standards is scheduled by April 2009.

The document, available at <http://tinyurl.com/225htc>, outlines the mandatory use of Programmable Communicating Thermostats on page 64:

"Upon receiving an emergency signal, the PCT shall respond to commands contained in the emergency signal, including changing the set-point by any number of degrees or to a specific temperature set-point. The PCT shall not allow customer changes to thermostat settings during emergency events."

The PCT specifications require them to include a "non-removable Radio Data System device that is compatible with the default statewide DR (Demand Response) communications system, which can be used by utilities to send price and emergency signals."

The mandatory nature of the proposal was described in a Jan. 4 article in the American Thinker, an online political magazine with a conservative bent. The article, which denounced the plan as overly intrusive - and economically counterproductive - is at <http://tinyurl.com/29q2tp>.

Michael Shames, UCAN's executive director, called the directive "a stunner" in an e-mail. "These 'advanced' energy technologies have the potential to be used for both good and evil. It looks like the California Energy

Commission wants it both ways... good and evil."

Shames wrote that allowing external control of thermostats can help customers better manage their energy use, which he supports.

"However, it is repugnant and entirely unacceptable to mandate that the customer loses control over the device that will be mandatorily placed in their homes," Shames wrote.

Borre Winckel, executive officer of the Riverside building association, said the mandatory aspect of the proposal smacks of "Big Brother" governmental planning.

"This is not too different from certain voices we've heard from the water world... where if somebody were to use too much water, the water agency can (by) remote control turn your water off," he said.

"What's there to keep people from deciding you've had your lights on too long?" Winckel continued. "This really does go very deep into government control into how we lead our lives."

The thermostat control would be exercised only in cases of need, and is the latest refinement of a 30-year-old building energy conservation program, said Adam Gottlieb, a spokesman for the California Energy Commission.

Thanks to efficiency standards, California's demand for electricity has remained flat since the late 1970s even as its population has doubled, Gottlieb said.

Utilities know how to interpret the new mandate, he said, and when to apply it, even though the definitions are not specified in the document.

According to Gottlieb, though, the phrase "emergency events" refers to a Stage II event or higher as defined by the California Independent System Operator, which manages the state's electrical grid.

A Stage II event occurs when electricity reserves, or the surplus of supply over demand, fall below 5 percent. A Stage III event takes place when reserves drop below 1.5 percent, and customer power may be shut down involuntarily.

"Any emergency event would be a limited-time occurrence to prevent an imminent outage," Gottlieb said.

The terms "Stage II" and "Stage III" are not defined in the document, Gottlieb said. "It's more a term of art that the utilities are familiar with."

Rachel Laing, a spokeswoman for San Diego Gas & Electric Co., said the proposals are in the early stage of consideration, and explicit exemptions for health and safety would be adopted later.

"I think you're right, that it doesn't have in this proposal what the exemption criteria would be," Laing said. "This proposal is the start of the whole long process of several hearings, and those hearings are meant to identify issues just like this one. We expect that the final plan will have exemptions."

Laing said SDG&E notifies those with medical needs beforehand of rolling blackouts.

"Their account is flagged, and when we have a rolling blackout, a message is sent out in advance to those folks," Laing said.

North County Times