



7/16/25 Media Release:

## **Nevada County Sheriff's Office and Pacific Gas and Electric Company Partner on Camp Cleanup Efforts to Mitigate Fire Danger in Nevada County**

**NEVADA CITY** – This past spring, the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) learned of illegal camping off of the 21000 block of Lowell Hill Rd. in rural Nevada City, in close proximity to the small town of Dutch Flat in Placer County. A concerned citizen originally notified Placer County Sheriff's Office, who flew the area and determined the encampments were just over the Placer border in south Nevada County in a heavily remote area.

As fire danger is a major concern in Nevada County, NCSO deputies investigated the encampments. Seven encampments were located, five of which were inhabited by a total of nine people and two were abandoned. An abundance of trash was located over approximately three miles as well as numerous RVs, make-shift sheds and huts, and abandoned vehicles as well as operable vehicles. The amount of trash present was concerning, as it posed a direct fire risk, on top of illegal campfires. Additionally, there were a number of hazardous materials that could potentially pollute the nearby Bear River and many of the encampments were located underneath transmission lines, posing added danger.

NCSO Sergeant Andrew Liller, who is also embedded in the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services (OES) as their Emergency Operation Center Coordinator, identified the property owners as Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and notified them of the encampments and the concern for fire and pollutants.

“At the Sheriff's Office, we are responsible for evacuating residents during fires and we and OES also send out CodeRED alerts and encourage folks to sign up for CodeRED and have their go bags ready,” explained Sergeant Liller. “When I reached out to PG&E about the encampments and our fire concerns, they were very responsive. They were also surprised to learn these encampments had developed and prioritized creating a safety plan to clear the land effectively and permanently.”

As part of that plan, PG&E spent significant time researching the resources needed to clean out the three-mile radius of trash and to create a solution to eliminate future occurrences. By late June, PG&E contracted with NCSO to provide 24/7 security and illegal camping enforcement at the property over several weeks, giving PG&E an opportunity to bring in hired professionals to safely remove all RVs, vehicles, huts, and trash, which was successfully completed on July 8.

In total, PG&E removed 1,400 cubic yards of trash, filling approximately 35 dumpsters (40-yard size each) and 155 tons of scrap metal, filling an additional 14 dumpsters (40-yard size each). They also removed 25 cars, 12 RV trailers, 22 car batteries, 170 tires, 44 propane tanks, and 300 aerosol cans.

“Our goal was to help the campers safely relocate so we could make the area safe for the entire community by removing the fire risks,” said Brent Stangeland, a public safety specialist for PG&E. “Along with the Sheriff's Office, we communicated and worked with the campers to relocate without rushing but with steady progress. Our partnership with the Nevada County Sheriff's Office and shared focus on wildfire prevention is important in keeping the community safe.”

Prior to the camp cleanup efforts commencing, NCSO provided weekly patrols of the encampments and also worked with campers to connect them to appropriate social services and service providers, such as Hospitality House, who specializes in providing permanent housing solutions to people struggling with homelessness.

PG&E also worked with NCSO to take legal steps to remove campers from their private property, should any be unwilling to leave. Part of that process involved issuing campers formal eviction notices and posting no trespassing signs. PG&E will also be giving deputies future authority to arrest anyone for trespassing on their property on the first offense as appropriate.

“Our goal is to not arrest people for illegal camping but to help them understand the dangers that illegal camping pose to the entire community. Wildfires have been accidentally started by homeless people in Nevada County, so if we can reduce the amount of camping and instead connect people with providers like Hospitality House, it’s a benefit to all,” said Sergeant Liller. “All of the campers were provided assistance and Hospitality House has already provided shelter to some of the individuals.”

With the land now beautified and back to its original state, PG&E is now working to implement concrete barriers to eliminate public vehicle access and to hinder any future activity on their property.

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