



Pacific Gas & Electric Co. has been ordered to pay a \$1.6 billion penalty – the largest ever levied against a public utility – for a 2010 explosion in a gas pipeline it operated that killed eight people and destroyed dozens of homes in a San Francisco suburb.

The five-member California Public Utilities Commission voted 4-0 Thursday, with the commission president, Michael Picker, abstaining, to impose the penalty. Picker, however, called for a larger review of problems at PG&E, a move that The Associated Press says "suggests the energy behemoth could be broken up."

The AP writes:

"Picker said state safety citations against PG&E were rising, but that the utility was so big, with \$1.6 billion in earnings in 2014, that it was able to shrug off financial penalties. ...

'The commission will study 'the culture of safety' and organizational structure of Pacific Gas & Electric Co., which has its gas and electricity operations under a single corporate board and chief executive."

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