

PG&E'S PROFITABLE THREAT TO OUR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Back when PA's Department of Homeland Security was investigating anti-fracking activists as potential terrorist threats to critical infrastructure, I noted that the bigger threat to critical infrastructure pipelines was corporations that pocket rate increases rather than dedicating them to maintaining the pipelines.

Just to take one example, who do you think is a greater risk to our oil and gas infrastructure? A bunch of hippie protesters trying to limit drilling in the Marcellus Shale and thereby protect the quality of their drinking water (which is, itself, considered critical infrastructure)? Or PG&E, which sat on knowledge of an extremely high risk pipeline for three years even after setting aside the money to fix it?

Now CA's Public Utilities Commission is out with audit results that show just how negligent PG&E was.

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. diverted more than \$100 million in gas safety and operations money collected from customers over a 15-year period and spent it for other purposes, including profit for stockholders and bonuses for executives, according to a pair of state-ordered reports released Thursday.

An independent audit and a staff report issued by the California Public Utilities Commission depicted a poorly led company well-heeled in its gas operations and more concerned with

profit than safety.

The documents link a deficient PG&E safety culture – with its “focus on financial performance” – to the pipeline explosion in San Bruno on Sept. 9, 2010, that killed eight people and destroyed 38 homes.

The “low priority” the company gave to pipeline safety during the three years leading up to the San Bruno blast was “well outside industry practice – even during times of corporate austerity programs,” said the audit by Overland Consulting of Leawood, Kan.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier, who represents San Bruno, enunciates what’s going on perfectly.

“It is truly unconscionable that PG&E was allowed by the CPUC to steal ratepayer monies that should have been spent on safety and, instead, was put in the pockets of PG&E shareholders,” said Rep. Jackie Speier,

Though, if PG&E were Muslim and brown-skinned, they’d call this terrorism, not just theft.