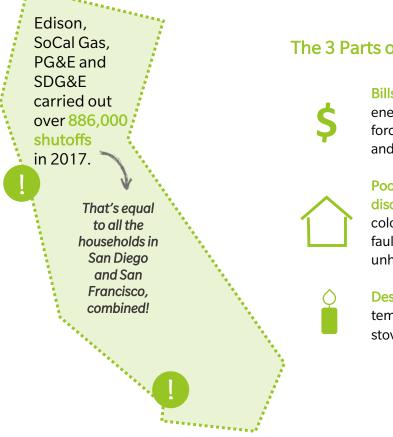


Energy Insecurity

When basic energy needs are out of reach for families.





The 3 Parts of Energy Insecurity⁴

Bills Beyond Reach. Families struggling to pay high energy bills are also faced with rising housing costs, forcing them to make difficult tradeoffs between utilities and rent, food, and healthcare.

Poor Quality Housing. Due to the persistent legacy of discriminatory housing policies, low-income families of color are more likely to live in substandard housing with faulty heating or cooling and poor insulation that is unhealthy and unsafe and demands higher utility bills.

Desperation. Families are forced to tolerate unsafe temperatures or alternative heating or lighting, like stoves or candles to live without lights, heat or cooling.

Energy bills are a major concern for California families just like housing and food. Even with utility discount programs, our elders, low-income families, and people of color are left behind.



3.9 million low-income households in California—over two-thirds—spend more than 30% of their income on housing.¹



4.1 million low-income adults in California about 2 out of 5 are unable to afford enough food.²

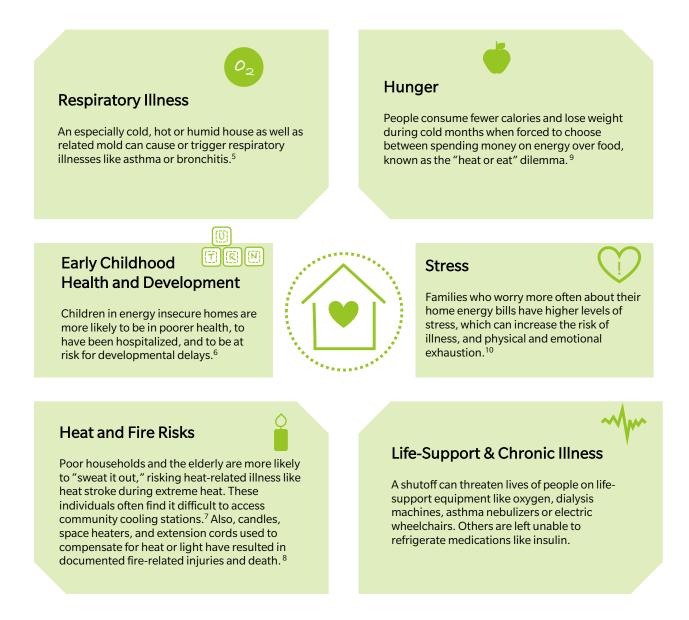


3.3 million low-income households In California about 2 out of 3 are energy

insecure.3



Energy insecurity threatens the **health** and **safety** of low-income families, especially **children** and people who are **medically vulnerable**.



Energy insecurity creates other problems – children unable to do homework without the lights, parents without phone access if unable to charge a cellphone or families forced to forego basic needs like childcare in order to keep the lights on.



In a state where housing costs are already high, energy insecurity makes it even harder to find and keep housing.



Forced to choose between paying the rent or mortgage or paying a utility bill, families are put at risk of displacement through an eviction or foreclosure. Utility debt can even trigger a tax lien to be placed on the home, which can lead to a foreclosure. For families using Section 8 vouchers or living in other subsidized housing, a utility shutoff can mean an eviction and a loss of affordable housing benefits permanently.



Homelessness

For families who are **homeless**, unpaid debt can stand in the way of leaving the shelter or the street and moving into stable housing.



Housing Quality & Safety Unable to establish utility service elsewhere, utility debt can effectively trap families who want to leave poor quality or unsafe housing. Renters with physical housing issues may be hesitant to raise these concerns to their landlord for fear of an eviction or other retaliation. Additionally, renters often lack the authority to make energy efficiency upgrades to their homes, which could lower their monthly utility bill. and no utilities without stable housing.

There is no

utilities . . .

without

stable housing

Although illegal, it's not uncommon for landlords to take advantage of tenants by coercing tenants into paying outstanding bills of previous tenants, using tenant electricity for personal or shared spaces, or circumventing rent stabilization through inflated utility fees.



What's at stake?



And it's jeopardizing the health, safety, housing, and stability of millions of California families!

- + Utility bills are too high.
- + Shutoffs are happening too often.
- + Energy insecurity disproportionately burdens our elders, low-income families, people of color, children and people with medical vulnerabilities.

How can we address the problem?

Affordability

The cost of utilities must be affordable. We need reasonable utility rates, discount programs, payment plans, arrearage management and collections practices that are equitable, humane and effective.

Protections

It is essential that we protect certain households from ever facing a utility shutoff, including our elders, people with serious medical vulnerability and young children.

Efficiency & Renewables

We need energy efficiency programs, renewable energy, and related jobs with an explicit focus on communities of color who have long shouldered the inequitable burden of energy injustice. These policies must not encourage housing displacement.

And, all our efforts must uphold the values of affordability, accessibility, health, climate justice, and economic equity.

What can you do?

Spread the Word

To raise awareness, coordinate a training for your staff, testify at a California Public Utilities **Commission Public Participation Hearing or** participate in a TURN action.

Advocate and Litigate

Legislative and regulatory advocacy as well as litigation are key strategies. To start, contact your representative to share why this issue matters to you.

Measure It

By measuring and reporting data on energy insecurity, we make a statement that the issue is important and track our progress.

Organize & Build Power

We need the knowledge, people power, and leadership of the communities most impacted by these issues. The first step is to become a member of TURN and an organizational partner of the Utility Justice Coalition!

Research It

Energy insecurity is significantly understudied, and research on prevalence, consequences and effectiveness of programs and policies is critical.

Sources

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²⁰¹⁴ California Health Interview Survey. Low-income is defined as below 200 percent of the federal poverty line

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