



CITY OF OAKLAND
newsrelease
Office of the City Attorney

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City of Oakland declares utility shut-offs in foreclosed buildings to be a significant threat to public health and safety

OAKLAND, CA – On Monday, December 22, City Attorney John Russo announced a declaration that will help renters in foreclosed buildings keep the heat on this winter.

The declaration – signed by Russo, City Administrator Dan Lindheim and Oakland Building Official Ray Derania – states that the termination of water, heat or electrical service at foreclosed rental properties constitutes a significant threat to public health and safety in Oakland.

Under California law, utility companies and public utility districts cannot shut off service in a multi-unit building when a city declares that termination would result in a threat to the health and safety of the occupants or the public.

At a press conference Monday at City Hall, Russo was joined by officials from PG&E and several tenants from foreclosed buildings who lost utility service.

“In Oakland, banks that foreclose on rental properties have often refused to accept their legal obligations to their new tenants,” Russo said. “Too many banks treat these properties as if they were merely slums. Families in foreclosed buildings have lost heat or water, sometimes for weeks at a time, forcing them to live in inhumane and unsafe conditions. Especially at this time of year, this represents an immediate and significant threat to health and safety in Oakland.”

The declaration calls on PG&E and the East Bay Municipal Utility District to delay termination of utilities at foreclosed rental properties for 120 days from the date of the first shut-off notice to tenants.

“To be clear: This is not about giving tenants a free ride,” Russo said. “This is about giving tenants enough time to determine ownership of the property and arrange for continued service.”

Tenants who lose PG&E following a foreclosure can call PG&E at 1-800-743-5000 for assistance. PG&E operators are able to assist in multiple languages if necessary.
