

PG&E's help sought in felling RDM trees

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RIO DEL MAR — Rio del Mar Improvement Association directors will attempt, through PG&E, to rid the area of trees that pose potential safety problems.

Association directors, led by Director Karl Kolb, will soon ask PG&E to conduct a tree survey of the Rio del Mar area to identify trees causing problems, or those with the potential to cause problems involving PG&E overhead lines. The utility has an ongoing program for removing problem trees and replacing them with better specimens in locations not directly under lines.

Directors were quick to point out that no official move for the program would occur without the consent of area residents. They discussed the possibility of inviting a PG&E representative to the organization's annual meeting in October.

Rio del Mar has long been a problem area for PG&E due to the many mature — and sometimes overgrown trees — that can disrupt electrical service.

Association directors acknowledged that PG&E would only be concerned with trees posing problems with its lines. Still, Kolb, who was directed to pursue the program, said, "We could get rid of a lot

of bad trees in this area."

According to Jerry Marsh, PG&E's tree-trimming contract administrator for the area, a survey of Rio del Mar's trees could be initiated and completed this year, with the project going out to bid as soon as next year.

"Our main concern is continuity of service," he said. "The California Department of Forestry requires a minimum 4-foot clearance between any landscaping and our lines. Our objective is to remove any trees that are causing problems."

Marsh said Rio del Mar poses increasing problems because of the pines, redwoods and eucalyptus — all extremely fast-growing trees.

"We have very mature pines and redwoods growing through and past our electrical conductors. We have a continuous problem of falling limbs," he said. "Also, with eucalyptus, there's always a problem with bark shredding."

Besides power outages, the trees pose potential fire hazards, added Marsh. When branches fall atop electrical lines, a fire could start.

Marsh said the utility has completed tree-removal programs in Pleasanton, Antioch and San Lorenzo.