

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 8, 2006

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**A WATER SAFETY WARNING IS ISSUED TO RECREATIONISTS WHILE AGENCIES
PRACTICE WATER SAFETY RESCUES**

SAN FRANCISCO- Pacific Gas and Electric Company and the California Department of Boating and Waterways are teaming up with a variety of State and Federal agencies to warn those planning outings on the state's numerous streams, rivers, and reservoirs or in the California Delta, to practice extreme caution. The near record March and April precipitation this year has left the state with a snow pack that is 190% of normal for this time of year. Additionally, below normal temperatures have delayed the snow melt by nearly one month. Now the snow pack is 'ripe' and ready to release its water to the rivers, lakes and reservoirs downstream, when recreationists will want to cool off in local waterways.

With most reservoirs currently full, much of the melt-caused runoff during the next six to nine weeks will be spilled uncontrollably as very cold, swift moving run-off water. The flows will fluctuate up and down with the warming and cooling of the day creating a condition called "pulsing" or the rising and falling of the amount of water flow.

Flow rates on mountain streams, especially unregulated side water flows, will significantly increase in magnitude after dark each day, echoing the effect of afternoon heating in upstream headwater drainages.

These treacherous conditions can quickly turn an otherwise rewarding recreation experience to one of tragedy. With the stage set for the largest snowmelt-caused reservoir spill in eight years, water recreationists need to be extra vigilant of conditions and take appropriate safety precautions when recreating in and around the delta, mountain streams, rivers and reservoirs.

Know the Water

- Kayakers and canoeists need to be prepared for swift water.
- Lakes and ponds are cold and are very attractive on warm spring days. Use caution and common sense with young children playing near water.

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- Sudden cold water immersion can trigger cardiac arrest.
- Cold water can cause hyperventilation contributing to fatigue. When combined with swift water, even the strongest swimmers are easily overwhelmed.
- Cold water can stimulate the “gasp reflex” causing an involuntary inhalation of air or water.
- The “gag reflex,” a result of cold water immersion, prevents air or water from passing in to the lungs causing asphyxiation.
- Cold water entering the ear canal can cause vertigo and disorientation. This may confuse the swimmer causing the victim to swim deeper into the water.

Know your limits

- Swimming in open water is more difficult than in a swimming pool – people tire more quickly and can get into trouble.
- Cold water causes impairment leading to fatalities. Cold water reduces body heat 25-30 times faster than air does at the same temperature.

Wear a life jacket

- Even the best swimmers can misjudge the water and their skills when boating or swimming; conditions change quickly in open water. Wearing a life jacket can increase survival time.
- Plan ahead; wear a life jacket before entering the water.
- Be aware that life jackets lose much of their flotation ability in white water conditions and may not provide the same protection against drowning in such conditions.

When Boating

- Watch for floating hazards such as limbs, logs, bark and other debris carried downstream by this year’s heavy rainfall and run-off. Keeping your speed down will allow more time to avoid running into any debris.
- Watch for submerged hazards such as rocks, logs and other debris not easily seen as waters recede.

For more information from Pacific Gas and Electric Company and the California Department of Boating and Waterways, visit the following web sites: www.pge.com or www.dbw.ca.gov