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Eaton Fire Plaintiffs Say Edison Is Delaying Litigation

By **Mike Curley**

Law360 (November 17, 2025, 1:04 PM EST) -- A group of plaintiffs suing Southern California Edison Co. over the Eaton Fire that began in January are accusing the utility of acting in bad faith by refusing to negotiate in mediation, despite admitting to shareholders that its equipment is responsible for the blaze.

In a **joint case management statement** filed Thursday, the plaintiffs in the litigation consolidated under Jeremy Gurse's suit said it's "abundantly clear" that Edison wants to waste judicial resources and cause needless delay for the community it destroyed, while violating court rules about contacting plaintiffs by trying to strong-arm them into a much-discounted payout.

In its portion of the same statement, Edison denied the allegations, saying that mediation is premature this soon after the fire as there are other potentially liable parties who could be added to the litigation and that any outreach to the community is general and entirely voluntary, and the company has taken efforts to ensure it isn't communicating with any represented parties.

Guernsey's suit is one of **several** filed in January, as the fire was still being brought under control, alleging that the blaze was the result of Southern California Edison Co. neglecting its duty to control highly flammable vegetation around its live power lines.

The suit claimed that the utility failed to de-energize power lines that cross Eaton Canyon, which is north of Pasadena, California, despite a red flag wind warning issued by the National Weather Service the day before the fire was sparked and repeated warnings in the days leading up to Jan. 7 that strong Santa Ana winds could gust up to 100 miles per hour.

According to media reports, the fire killed at least 19 people and damaged more than 9,000 buildings.

In Thursday's statement, which also discussed summary judgment and expert disclosure deadlines, the individual plaintiffs said that in Edison's Securities Exchange Commission filings, it has effectively admitted that it will "incur additional material losses" in connection with the fire and that it is likely that its own equipment started the fire.

Despite these admissions, Edison continues to refuse mediations before liability discovery is complete, according to the plaintiffs, even as it tells shareholders and insurers that it wants to compensate its customers quickly.

"Edison's public admission that its equipment likely caused the Eaton Fire is a step in the right direction, but their courtroom behavior tells a very different story," Gerald Singleton of Singleton Schreiber, representing the individual plaintiffs, said in a press release Friday. "Instead of agreeing to negotiated settlements that would fairly compensate fire victims, Edison is using tactics of delay, obstruction, and pressure, attempting to force survivors to accept unilateral settlement offers that are far below what they deserve."

The company has also instituted an out-of-court compensation program, which the plaintiffs say allows the company to unilaterally set the amount of compensation for claimants at a fraction of the actual damages they suffered, while also holding sole discretion to determine when the claim is "substantially complete," and threatening fire victims with investigation and prosecution for alleged "false statements," thereby pushing customers to underreport their claims.

In addition, the company has begun what it calls workshops with the community, which the plaintiffs say is a violation of court rules against communicating with represented parties, and the plaintiffs accused them of going so far as to knock on the doors of represented individuals.

In its portion of the statement, Edison disputed the allegations and said the plaintiffs were factually wrong about several of the accusations, saying the real issue is that the individual plaintiffs take issue with Edison's right to defend itself in litigation.

The company said it has never conceded liability, and its statement to the SEC stresses that its investigation is ongoing.

Edison further argued that mediation is at the least premature, as the factual record is still in its early stages of development, inspections and testing remain to be finished and not all potentially responsible entities are in the litigation as yet.

The company also defended its recovery compensation program, saying that it's voluntary and nonbinding and that it is not working unilaterally, but rather makes clear its valuation methodologies for a program created in consultation with renowned leaders in compensation fund design.

Edison added it has no desire to delay the process, but it reasonably wants to ensure that claimants submit complete and accurate submissions. It called the accusations of scare tactics "ridiculous" because it only seeks to prevent fraudulent activity.

As for the out-of-court communications, Edison said its workshops are informational in nature and entirely voluntary and said it maintains procedures to identify community members who may be represented by counsel, saying any communications with them are through their attorneys.

The company said that of the alleged direct communications, several were to people who submitted an email address without identifying themselves, one was a phone call about a power outage unrelated to the litigation, and the company has not knocked on anyone's doors.

"Edison is delaying the litigation while at the same time encouraging Eaton Fire survivors to forgo litigation in exchange for quick but discount settlements," Amanda L. Riddle of Corey Luzaich de Ghetaldi & Riddle LLP, representing the individual plaintiffs, said Monday. "It's an abuse of the justice process and an attempt to mislead those who Edison has already victimized."

In a statement Monday, Rahul Ravipudi of Panish Shea Ravipudi LLP said Edison has admitted to its shareholders and in reports to the media that it is responsible for the Eaton Fire but has made "frivolous defenses" in court to delay the payment of full and fair compensation to the affected community.

"Edison's equipment caused so much destruction in taking families' homes, loved ones, and their community and there is only one reason they would refuse to negotiate a full and fair resolution — to prey on the most desperate and vulnerable to get dramatic discounts," Ravipudi said. "These are actions of a company that wants to take no meaningful accountability. Edison should not be able to rely on the State of California and all of the taxpayers to shoulder the burden of paying for Edison's poor decisions. So we are focused on going to trial as soon as possible to hold Edison fully accountable and compelling them to do everything they haven't done in the past to prevent future disasters."

Representatives for the other plaintiffs and for Edison could not immediately be reached for comment Monday.

The individual plaintiffs are represented by Rahul Ravipudi of Panish Shea Ravipudi LLP, Amanda L. Riddle of Corey Luzaich de Ghetaldi & Riddle LLP and Gerald Singleton of Singleton Schreiber.

The subrogation plaintiffs are represented by Jordan B. Everakes of Grotefeld Hoffmann, Amanda R. Stevens of Schroeder Loscotoff Stevens LLP, Howard D. Maycon of Cozen O'Connor and Matthew E. Delinko of Bauman Loewe Witt & Maxwell PLLC.

The public entity plaintiffs are represented by John P. Fiske and Victoria E. Sherlin of Baron & Budd

PC and Ed Diab and Kristen Barton of Diab Chambers LLP.

Southern California Edison is represented by Douglas J. Dixon, Brittani A. Jackson and Michael A. Behrens of Hueston Hennigan LLP and in-house by Belynda B. Reck, Patricia A. Cirucci and Brian Cardoza.

The case is Gursev v. Southern California Edison Co. et al., case number 25STCV00731, in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Los Angeles.

--Additional reporting by Dorothy Atkins. Editing by Rich Mills.

Update: This story has been updated with additional comment from the plaintiffs' attorney.

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