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VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Docket # 2024 NOV

Sheryl Bilbrey
Program Manager, Environmental Science Division
Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
715 P Street, 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: San Diego Gas & Electric Company's Response to Notice of Violation –
ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323**

Dear Program Manager Bilbrey:

San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) provides this response to the finding identified in the Notice of Violation “ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323” (Notice of Violation or NOV) issued by the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety’s (Energy Safety) on December 12, 2024, regarding Energy Safety’s inspection of work completed by SDG&E in accordance with its 2024 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP).

Violation 1 – Energy Safety observed that in implementing WMP initiative 8.2.3.1 - Pole clearing (WMP .512), SDG&E failed to complete its work at pole ID P371207 at coordinates 32.881357, -116.927326. Energy Safety considers this violation for completeness to be in the “Moderate” risk category.

As further discussed below, SDG&E is not required to perform pole clearing for the pole noted in the NOV, because the pole has CAL FIRE exempt equipment on it. Upon inspection of the pole after receipt of the NOV, SDG&E has, in its discretion, required its pole clearing contractor to perform additional clearing around the pole and obtained the shared property owners’ consent to remove other vegetation. Photos of this remedial action are included in this response.

I. SDG&E RESPONSE

A. Violation 1 – Pole Clearing, Failure to completely clear around pole ID P371207.

Pole P371207 is exempted from the clearance requirements of Public Resources Code (PRC) 4292 based on the type of hardware mounted on the pole; specifically, the hot-line-clamp connectors which are classified by Cal Fire as exempt from the regulation. SDG&E is providing the following link to the *California Power Line Fire Prevention Field Guide* (2021 Edition) which describes equipment devices exempt from PRC 4292. See page 103.

[2021-power-line-fire-prevention-field-guide-ada-final_jf_20210125.pdf](#)

SDG&E respectfully contends it is technically not required to maintain a firebreak around this pole. Despite not being required to do so, historically SDG&E has partially maintained a clearance radius surrounding P371207 as a discretionary measure. However, SDG&E has intentionally not removed ice plant, (*Malephora crocea*) growing within the 10-foot radius illustrated in the NOV, as iceplant is generally considered fire resistant. The decision to leave specific vegetation within the clearance radius is made by the pole clearing contractor who determined the ice plant met the criteria for exemption under the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14 § 1255 - Exemptions to Minimum Clearance Provisions – Public Resources Code (PRC) 4292 which includes in part:

The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4292 are not required around poles and towers, including line junction, corner and dead-end poles and towers:

(d) Where vegetation is maintained less than 30.48 cm (12 inches) in height, is fire resistant, and is planted and maintained for the specific purpose of preventing soil erosion and fire ignition.

SDG&E acknowledges that its 2023-2025 WMP states that “Mechanical pole brushing is the clearing of all vegetation around the base of a pole down to bare mineral soil for a radius of 10 feet from the outer circumference of the pole.”¹ Although SDG&E does reference PRC 4292 in its WMP in relation to pole clearing, discussions with Energy Safety’s Environmental Science Division have made clear that Energy Safety believes SDG&E’s WMP lacks sufficient detail regarding SDG&E’s application of the exemptions in PRC 4292.

Accordingly, SDG&E has developed a procedural training document to provide guidance on what field conditions merit the application of an exemption under CCR Title 14 § 1255 - Exemptions to Minimum Clearance Provisions. The procedural training document includes the Title 14 exemption, as well as a list of vegetation species SDG&E considers fire-resistant and safe to remain within the cleared radius of poles subject to PRC 4292. Though a single, comprehensive list of fire-resistant vegetation could conceivably include thousands of different species and varieties, the list in the procedural document will include a broad representation of some of the most common species SDG&E could consider as exempt. SDG&E provided a draft of its procedural training document to the Environmental Science Division on November 25, 2024 for review.

SDG&E last performed mechanical clearing within the 10-foot radius of pole P371207 on 8/19/24. In follow-up to this NOV SDG&E reviewed the location in the field and agrees with ESD’s findings that desiccated vegetation within the clearance radius should have been cleared by the contractor on 8/19/24, and that it exceeded Title 14 § 1255 exemption criteria. SDG&E instructed the contractor to return and reclear the pole. SDG&E was able to secure the authorization from the customer to allow the removal of all vegetation within the radius. This work was completed on 12/16/24.

¹ SDG&E’s 2023-2025 WMP (Rev. #2.1, June 7, 2024) p. 273
(<https://efiling.energy-safety.ca.gov/eFiling/Getfile.aspx?fileid=56793&shareable=true>).

SDG&E is providing the following screenshots as supporting evidence as Attachment A:

- Photos of the post-NOV re-clear activity which occurred 12/16/24
- Dispatch work order created for the pole brushing activity in response to the NOV
- Database record for P371207 showing the brush activity dates in 2024

SDG&E is not requesting a written hearing for the findings addressed in this response; however, SDG&E reserves the right to raise these points in subsequent procedural stages and/or proceedings as necessary. Further, although Energy Safety has the right to refer certain notices to the California Public Utilities Commission for enforcement action, the findings in this notice do not merit referral, as there is inadequate support for a finding that SDG&E has failed to substantially comply with its approved WMP.²

II. CONCLUSION

SDG&E appreciates Energy Safety's continued efforts to identify, communicate, and work together to promote wildfire safety throughout California.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Laura M. Fulton

Attorney for

San Diego Gas and Electric Company

Attachment A – Screenshots

NOV ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323

Figure 1: SDG&E response post-NOV at P371207. Two photos showing re-clear work completed 12/16/24.



NOV ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323

Figure 1 continued: SDG&E response post-NOV at P371207. Two photos showing re-clear work completed 12/16/24.



NOV ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323

Figure 2: Pole brush work order post-NOV.

My Work Service Requests Work Orders Projects Reports GIS Search Recent Activity Asset Analytics

Work Order Email Print Save Close Delete Send to MDT Recall Work Order

Work Order

Description: VM PB REBRUSH
Number: 1225964164 ETS STATUS:
Entity Type: VPOLE Change
Category: VM Pole Brush
Initiated By: Date: 12/13/2024 12:02 PM
Status: Complete Priority: Same Day
Requested By: Supervisor:
Submit To: ASPLUNDH, OFFICE Date: 12/16/2024 11:45 AM
Projected Start: 12/16/2024 12:00 PM Projected Finish: 12/16/2024 12:00 PM
Opened By: Date:
Closed By: Date:
Completed By:
Actual Start: 12/16/2024 11:59 AM Actual Finish: 12/16/2024 11:59 AM
Comments: Add Comment Sort
12/13/2024 12:02 PM
NOV ESD SDGE CAC23 202041121_1323: California Office of Energ...

Location Information

WO Address:
Location Details:
VMA: 452 District: Eastern
Thom Bros Map 1212A7
Page:
X Location: 1,662,719.800 Y Location: 11,936,119.852

Assets

Total Entities: 1

Asset	Asset Id	Asset Uid	Location	Warranty Date	Work Completed	Feat
<input type="checkbox"/>	VPOLE	44875	YY16833		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VPO

Update Work Order XY when adding/removing assets?

Map Layer Fields

Reset

NOV ESD_SDGE_CAC23_20241121_1323

Figure 3: Screenshot of database record documenting pole clearing activities at P371207 in 2024.

Pole Brush - YY16833 (Forester)

YY16833 (1)
vPole

Pole Brush - YY16833

Field	Value
Pole ID	P371207
Pole Brush ID	YY16833
Last User	
Pole Condition Code	Completed Rework

Pole Brush-YY16833

PB - Admin Update | T&E Work | **Activities**

Activities

Activity	Date	Condition Code
Reclear PB	12/16/2024 11:59:38 AM +00:00	Completed Rework
Admin Update	12/13/2024 11:52:16 AM +00:00	Audited, Requires Rework
PB Pre-Inspection	9/10/2024 12:00:01 PM +00:00	Deleted
Mechanical PB	8/19/2024 9:25:44 AM +00:00	Mechanical Brush Completed
PB Pre-Inspection	11/29/2023 1:51:06 PM +00:00	Environmental Season