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NEWS

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# Southern California Edison Proposes Grid Safety and Resiliency Program to Address the Growing Risk of Wildfires

*Editor's Note: Photographs and b-roll are available here.*

ROSEMEAD, Calif., Sept. 10, 2018 — As part of its ongoing efforts to protect customers and communities from the growing risk of wildfires, Southern California Edison proposed additional wildfire safety measures in a filing today with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

The proposed $582 million Grid Safety and Resiliency Program (GS&RP) aligns with the wildfire mitigation plans required by Senate Bill 901, one of the wildfire bills passed by the legislature last month and currently awaiting the Governor's signature.

"The devastation caused by the 2017 and 2018 wildfires leaves no doubt that wildfire risk has increased to the point where California needs to reassess the way we collectively prepare for and prevent wildfires," said Phil Herrington, SCE senior vice president of Transmission & Distribution. "This includes a role for utilities in going beyond existing state standards and traditional utility practices to incorporate leading mitigation measures from around the world, selected based on their effectiveness.

"We are taking a holistic approach and proposing to implement measures between now and the end of 2020 that will further harden our infrastructure, bolster our situational awareness capabilities and enhance our operational practices," Herrington said. "We also will continue to work with state leaders on policies to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire damages while ensuring equitable distribution of costs."

**Initiatives to Further Harden Infrastructure**

Insulated Wires: SCE will replace nearly 600 miles of overhead power lines in high fire risk areas with insulated wire by the end of 2020. This will be the first large-scale deployment of insulated wire in the U.S. designed to reduce wildfire risk.

While up to 10 percent of wildfire ignitions in California are from power lines, in SCE's service area more than half of ignitions associated with distribution lines are caused when objects such as metallic balloons, tree limbs and palm fronds come into contact with power lines. While bare, uninsulated wire meets California state standards and is widely used by utilities across the country, insulated wires can significantly reduce the potential for ignitions resulting from contact with foreign objects. In addition, insulated wires provide the greatest overall value compared to other mitigation measures such as undergrounding lines.

Where appropriate, fire-resistant composite poles will be used when poles need to be replaced to support the increased weight and diameter of the insulated wire.

SCE plans to replace about 3,400 miles of overhead line with insulated wire between 2021 and 2025; funding for that work would be included in future General Rate Case requests.

Current Limiting Fuses: SCE is installing 15,700 of these devices, which interrupt current more quickly and avoid the potential creation of their own heat source during fuse operation when compared to traditional, industry standard fuses. In addition to reducing the risk of wildfires, installation of the current limiting fuses is expected to boost reliability by segmenting circuits to isolate problems, thereby limiting the number of customers affected by an outage.

Remote-Controlled Automatic Reclosers (RARs): Under normal conditions, the grid automatically tests any circuit experiencing a temporary interruption or "fault"; if the fault condition no longer exists, the circuit is quickly re-energized. During Red Flag conditions (low humidity and high wind), SCE uses RARs to stop affected circuits from automatically re-energizing so SCE crews can physically inspect the lines before they are re-energized. SCE currently has 930 RARs and is installing another 98, in addition to updating the RAR settings to increase both the speed and sensitivity of the RARs to react to line faults.

**Projects Increasing Situational Awareness**

High-Definition Cameras: SCE will deploy up to 160 high-definition cameras which will enable emergency management personnel, including fire agencies, to more quickly respond to emerging and spreading wildfires and save critical time in assessing fire severity.

Weather Stations and Modeling Tools: SCE will install up to 850 weather stations, beginning with 125 weather stations in 2018. Data from the weather stations will be used by a new advanced weather modeling tool that can forecast weather conditions within a third of a mile. This information can be used to inform operational decisions and optimize resource allocation during emergency situations.

**Enhancing Operational Practices**

Vegetation Management: While the CPUC last year issued aggressive new rules on tree pruning in high fire risk areas, SCE is proposing to do even more: SCE will inspect all trees within 200 feet of its electric facilities and remove or prune trees that could strike the equipment. "These trees are far enough away from electrical equipment that they are not covered by existing clearance requirements, but close enough to present a possible threat during high winds," Herrington said.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS): As a measure of last resort, the company proactively de-energizes portions of its system under extreme fire conditions to keep customers and communities safe. The company will implement a number of measures designed to minimize the inconvenience to customers, including:

- A new Emergency Outage Notification System to send customized messages before, during and after a PSPS.
- Portable Community Power Trailers so customers can charge their personal devices (mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) and continue to receive outage updates and public safety information while staying connected with friends and family.
- A pilot project deploying drones operating Beyond Visual Line of Sight to quickly survey power lines after a PSPS so power can be restored more quickly.

Infrared Inspections: SCE is expanding the use of infrared inspection for overhead distribution lines to help identify equipment at risk of failure. Visual inspections, while valuable, cannot identify potential issues inside sealed components or covered objects that may lead to component failure.

“With both safety and consumer cost in mind, we believe that the portfolio of projects we are proposing will work together to provide a comprehensive approach to further minimize the risk of wildfires and increase the resiliency and reliability of our grid,” Herrington said.

If the GS&RP is approved, the average monthly bill for a residential customer would increase by about $1.20; income-qualified CARE customers would see an increase of about 81 cents per month. The total costs include $175 million in Operations & Maintenance expenses and $407 million in capital spending.

**About Southern California Edison**
An Edison International (NYSE:EIX) company, Southern California Edison is one of the nation’s largest electric utilities, serving a population of approximately 15 million via 5 million customer accounts in a 50,000-square-mile service area within Central, Coastal and Southern California.

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