

**Cleveland National Forest Electric System Fire Hardening and Public Safety Power Line Replacement Project**

SDG&E® is committed to providing safe and reliable energy, which means we may need to replace and upgrade equipment to ensure the overall system is continuing to deliver reliable energy.

This project, known as the Cleveland National Forest project, is a cornerstone of SDG&E’s community fire safety and electric system-hardening efforts. The project is critical to ensuring we are doing all we can to protect the forest and our customers who live in and around the area.

One of the areas where SDG&E will be working as part of this project is Mount Laguna. This work began on May 2019 and will continue through December 2020. Phase I of Circuit (C) 440 includes both an overhead and underground portion on Mount Laguna and is scheduled to be complete by July 2020. This portion of the project runs approximately 9 miles along Sunrise Highway from the base of the highway near Interstate 8 to the intersection of Morris Ranch Road.

Phase II of C440 also includes both overhead and underground work on Mount Laguna, but towards the top of the mountain. SDG&E and its contracted crews will be installing a new, fire hardened, underground distribution circuit (along Sunrise Highway from Morris Ranch Road to Mount Laguna Drive, as well as short sections along other smaller roads), removing the overhead alignment that corresponds to the new underground alignment, and reconstructing portions of the alignment near Morris Ranch Road and at the top of the mountain near Sunrise Highway and Los Huecos Road. Construction activities include: site preparation, trenching, underground conduit installation, cable pulling, removal of 72 existing wood poles, installation of 347 weatherized steel poles (77 of which are new and 270 of which are replacements), wire stringing, and restoration.

SDG&E will continue to work closely with the United States Forest Service and area residents to ensure construction activities are as least disruptive as possible.

The information provided below recaps the project’s benefits and highlights some of the most frequently asked questions. Please feel free to contact us directly should you have any additional questions or concerns.

**Q&A**

**What is the timeframe for construction of this project?**

Construction on Phase I of C440 began in May 2019 and is anticipated to be completed by July 2020. Construction on Phase II of C440 began in June 2020 and is anticipated to be completed by December 2020.

**How is the construction work being monitored to ensure that resources are protected?**

Agency-approved Biological Monitors/Environmental Inspectors (BMs/EIs) are on site for all initial ground-disturbing and vegetation-removal activities during construction. In addition, BMs/EIs conduct pre-construction sweeps of active construction areas for biological resources, and monitor active construction areas for compliance with project mitigation measures. Avian Biologists conduct nesting bird surveys prior to construction starting in an area, implement nest avoidance buffers if necessary, and monitor any nests that are identified according to approved project plans. Similarly, Archaeological Monitors conduct surveys for cultural resources prior to construction activity. Archaeological Monitors and Native American Monitors are also on site during construction activities that occur within or adjacent to cultural resources to protect these resources according to approved project plans, and monitor for any cultural resources that may be unexpectedly encountered during construction.

**What are the project benefits?**

* Enhanced safety and reliability of the SDG&E electric system
* Improved electric system performance during extreme weather conditions
* Reduced cost and environmental impacts for future maintenance activities

**How does this project increase safety and reliability?**

Replacement of old wood poles and installation of new undergrounding in an area that is subject to severe weather conditions—including extreme temperatures, high winds, and ice—will reduce fire risk and the number of weather-related outages; thereby, increasing the safety for surrounding communities, as well as improving the reliability of power delivery to these communities.

**Why is SDG&E proposing an increase in pole heights?**

Pole heights are generally increased with implementation of the fire hardening project in order to achieve increased conductor spacing, as well as spacing between the conductors and the ground. This increased spacing provides for greater distances between conductors, and reduces risk of conductor to conductor contact and conductor contact with foreign objects.

**Will all new infrastructure remain in current SDG&E Rights-of-Way?**

It is our intent to rebuild all new infrastructure facilities within our existing ROW. However, we cannot confirm we will be able to accomplish this in every instance. For example, we may need to incorporate design changes to improve public safety, reliability and resource protection which may require additional rights-of-way. We will work proactively and cooperatively with individual property owners and agencies should the need to acquire or revise easement rights occur.

**How do you know steel poles are safer than the existing poles?**

Existing wood poles, as compared to the proposed steel poles, are more susceptible to fire damage, woodpecker damage, termite damage, and deterioration due to weather conditions. Proposed steel poles are not as susceptible to these deterioration factors and are designed to remain standing during wildfire conditions due to the fire-resistant material resulting in improved system reliability.

**Why can’t you just underground all these lines?**

SDG&E has worked with the USFS on each of the proposed projects to prioritize locations where it is feasible to underground, such as along Sunrise Highway. However, there are several issues to consider when converting overhead power lines to an underground system; increased construction cost, increased maintenance cost, environmental impacts caused by trenching and acquiring new easements and rights of way. Also, should a power outage occur, the time it takes to restore power is generally longer since the failure is underground and not as easy to locate as overhead systems.

**Why is SDG&E proposing placing weather stations on the new poles?**

SDG&E has installed and is currently monitoring 144 pole mounted weather stations and five Remote Automated Weather Stations throughout its service territory. The weather network was installed with the original intention to monitor and better understand the fire weather conditions that lead to potential catastrophic wildfire across San Diego County and are not retrofitted with camera functionality.

**What does SDG&E do with the data collected from weather stations? Is this information made public?**

We have used the enhanced understanding acquired from the weather network to help develop a Fire Potential Index (FPI).  The FPI is a planning and decision support tool that incorporates weather and fuels information to rate the overall fire threat within predetermined subsets of the SDG&E service territory. The FPI is currently being incorporated into operations to assist decision makers in determining when field activities should be restricted and when no hot work should occur, when sensitive relay settings are enabled, when and where crews are staged, and other considerations. Weather data from the SDG&E weather stations is made available to our customers through <http://www.sdge.com/tools/windspeed-dashboard> and is also delivered directly to the National Weather Service and the fire agencies.

**Will SDG&E use information from the weather stations to shut off my power?**

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has acknowledged that SDG&E has the authority to shut off power in emergency situations when necessary to protect public safety. However, SDG&E does not have a standard requirement, or set of guidelines, that would trigger a shutoff.

SDG&E utilizes the information from the weather network, together with other collected data and live field observations, in exercising its judgment to make independent, site and condition-based decisions related to the operation of its electric system.

**What will happen to the AT&T lines that are co-located with the old wood poles?**

All poles on Phase II of C440 were designed to accommodate AT&T facilities. All AT&T facilities currently co-located with existing poles will be transferred to the new poles. Any AT&T facilities that are not currently co-located with SDG&E facilities (i.e., standalone AT&T facilities) will not be transferred as part of this project.

**Why are new interset poles and anchors needed on Phase II of C440?**

Section 43.1 of CPUC General Order No. 95 provides that heavy loading criteria shall apply in all parts of the State of California where the elevation exceeds 3,000 feet above sea level. Because Phase II of C440 occurs at an elevation range of 3,800 to 5,875 feet above sea level and winds can be between 85 and 111 miles per hour,the heavy loading criteria specified in CPUC General Order No. 95 was utilized in the final design of Phase II of C440 to accommodate stress caused by wind and ice. Abiding by these criteria required additional interset poles and anchors in some areas.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information on the project, please visit [sdge.com/cnf](http://www.sdge.com/cnf) or contact **SDG&E** Regional Public Affairs Manager, Todd Voorhees, at 1-844-765-6388 or tvoorhees@sdge.com. Information can also be found on the CPUC website at <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/dudek/CNF/CNF.htm>.