



California ISO
Your Link to Power

Media Statement

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ISO Statement Regarding San Diego Area Power Outage

FOLSOM, Calif. – The California Independent System Operator Corporation (ISO) is continuing to review the events that led to a 45 minute power outage in San Diego just after midnight on April 1, 2010. Preliminary findings from the review indicate that the ISO improperly allowed a San Diego area power plant to shut down. This initial decision led the ISO to operate outside the San Diego import limitation, which requires at least 25 percent of San Diego’s load to be served by local generation.

In addition, the review has determined that although the ISO acted in good faith and out of an abundance of caution to address the situation and protect the integrity of the entire electric grid, the ISO inappropriately applied an operating requirement that then called for load shedding to reduce demand.

ISO control room personnel involved in the event have been reassigned off the control room floor pending completion of the internal review.

To provide some context, the ISO is required by federal regulations to stay within what are known as “stability limitations” and to address any operational conditions that exceed the limitations within 20 minutes — even if it requires calling for load shedding. This is done to protect grid components and prevent grid instability from causing uncontrolled cascading outages. However, the San Diego import limitation is an operating requirement that is not subject to federal regulations that deal with stability limits.

When it appeared it would take longer than 20 minutes for enough generation to come on line to address the operating condition, the ISO called for San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) to reduce demand on the system through controlled load shedding.

“We acted in good faith, but we made mistakes, first allowing this situation to occur by not maintaining adequate local generation in San Diego, and then applying operating requirements incorrectly,” said ISO Vice President of Operations, Jim Detmers. “This was unacceptable, I am sorry it happened and I apologize to the people of San Diego who were impacted by this outage. The ISO is doing everything we can to ensure this does not happen again.”

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While the ISO still has only preliminary information from the internal review, it has already begun taking these actions to prevent a recurrence of this type of error.

- Improving operating systems and control room tools
- Providing better situational awareness to operators
- Adding to training regimens for all control room crews
- Reviewing operating procedures to determine how they can be improved

In addition, the ISO is cooperating fully with the Western Electric Coordinating Council (WECC) review of the event including its request for further information. The WECC is the western regional subgroup of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC). NERC is the federally designated Electric Reliability Organization.

The ISO is also fully briefing State and Federal regulatory agencies, the Governor's Office and key legislative leaders.

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