



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2002

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ISO Urging Fire Safety on July 4 And All Summer Long

Wildfires Can Have Severe Impact on Transmission Grid

(Folsom, CA) The California Independent System Operator, (ISO) is urging all Californians to be especially careful with fireworks and campfires and any use of fire this Fourth of July holiday. Wildfires can have a major impact on high-voltage transmission lines, disabling sections of the grid and leading to the potential for power outages.

“The smoke and ash from a brushfire can cause high voltage lines to trip off line” said Jim Detmers, Vice President of Operations at the ISO. “In other cases, the heat can actually damage electrical lines or other equipment.”

Detmers said the ISO has to deal with the fire threat virtually every summer, but this year seems to be worse than most. “Three times already this summer wildfires have forced major power lines out of service, and one time that resulted in a power outage affecting nearly half a million customers in Southern California.”

California fire officials say the situation is already critical, and it will only get worse through the summer as trees and brush dry out even more. This week is of special concern because of the added potential for fires from Fourth of July celebrations.

“If you’re going to use fireworks, use only the legal safe and sane varieties, use them responsibly, away from dry grass, brush and trees, and have a hose or fire extinguisher handy,” said Karen Terrill, Spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention. “And we’re also asking people to be very careful with barbecues and campfires or any other ignition source. It’s too dry out there to take any chances.”

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The ISO is working closely with the CDF to monitor wildfires, identify the threat to transmission facilities, and if possible, to minimize the impact on power delivery. “If we know about a fire before it affects the grid, we can usually take steps to avoid a power outage,” said Detmers. “Sometimes fire impacts transmission lines before anybody knows it’s burning, but coordination and communication with the CDF may buy us some valuable minutes.”

The California ISO is a not-for-profit public benefit corporation charged with managing the flow of electricity along California’s open-market wholesale power grid. The mission of the California ISO is to safeguard the reliable delivery of electricity, and ensure equal access to a 25,000 circuit miles of “electron highway”. As the impartial operator of the wholesale power grid in the state, the California ISO conducts a small portion of the bulk power markets. These markets are used to allocate space on the transmission lines, maintain operating reserves and match supply with demand in real time.

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