

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044
1400 Tenth Street, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Energy Commission
715 P Street, MS-48
Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Applicant: Southern California Gas Company

Project Title: CNTP Biogas to Low-Carbon H2 Conversion Project

Project Location – Specific: 8101 Rosemead Blvd

Project Location – City: Pico Rivera 90660 Project Location – County: Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Energy Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Southern California Gas Company

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial Exemption (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15268);
Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number
Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15306
Statutory Exemptions. State code number.
Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15061(b)(3))

Reasons why project is exempt:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.) requires public agencies to consider the potential impacts to the environment that may arise from the approval of "projects." The project here includes demonstration of a bench-scale non-thermal plasma reactor powered by renewable electricity at an existing facility in Southern California Gas Company—a natural gas investor-owned utility—service territory. On August 8, 2019, this facility received a Notice of Exemption (2019088026) from the Department of Toxic Substances Control. The permit allows the continued operations for a 10-year term with no expansion of use or physical alteration. CEQA exempts certain projects from its provisions. One such exemption, found at California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301, provides that projects which consist of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, and which involve negligible or no

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

expansion of use are exempt. The proposed project will be located entirely within a facility that already exists and that have the ability to operate through 2029. The proposed project will not expand the use of the facility because the project activities to design, fabricate, commission, and test the bench-scale system are in line with normal activities at the existing facility. Therefore, the project falls within section 15301 and will not have a significant effect on the environment.

CEQA also exempts projects that consist of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15306). The proposed project will involve research to scale up an early-stage, lab-scale, catalytic non-thermal plasma reactor to a modular, bench-scale system that can cost-effectively convert biogas into low-carbon hydrogen and virtually eliminate the negative environmental impacts associated with Steam Methane Reforming to fabricate and produce hydrogen. This work will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource because the system is expected to perform for at least 300 hours and produce up to 5 kilograms of hydrogen per day by project conclusion, which is small in comparison to the overall facility footprint. Additionally, the system will achieve a purity of 99.99 percent so there is no possibility of harmful emissions. For these reasons, the proposed project will have no significant effect on the environment and is categorically exempt under section 15306.

CEQA's exemptions are not absolute. Once a public agency, like the CEC, believes that a project may be exempt from environmental review, it must consider whether there are any exceptions that may preclude use of the exemption. The circumstances giving rise to an exception are listed in California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15300.2. The proposed project does not involve any cumulative impacts of successive projects of the same type in the same place that might be considered significant; does not involve unusual circumstances that might have a significant effect on the environment; will not result in damage to scenic resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; the project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5; and the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, none of the exceptions to categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project. Therefore, for the reasons stated above, this project is exemption from environmental review under CEQA.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Nadia Richards **Area code/Telephone/Ext:** 916-897-3804

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: *N. Richards* **Date:** 06/20/2022 **Title:** Mechanical Engineer

Signed by Responsible Agency

Signed by Lead Agency

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

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