

Notice of Exemption

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Department of Water Resources
San Luis Field Division, 31770 Gonzaga Rd
Gustine, CA 95322

Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

Project Title: Power Pole Maintenance in California Aqueduct Reach 2B, Reach 3, Reach 5, and Reach 6

Project Location City & County: Merced and Fresno Counties

Project Location – Specific: Work will occur at seven sites within the Department of Water Resources (DWR) right of way, along an existing PG&E service line on the left (L) and right (R) sides of the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct). The work sites are at: Milepost (MP) 57.14L and MP 61.02L in Aqueduct Reach 2B; MP 82.33R in Aqueduct Reach 3; MP 129.88L in Aqueduct Reach 5; and MP 146.25L, MP 147.75R, and MP 149.10L in Aqueduct Reach 6. MP 57.14L is the northernmost site and is approximately 0.46 miles south of the intersection of Sullivan Road and the Aqueduct. MP 149.10L is the southernmost site and is approximately 0.51 miles north of the intersection of West Stutz Road and the Aqueduct.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: PG&E needs to maintain seven existing utility poles located in the DWR Aqueduct right of way. Three poles are at sites in Merced County (two are in Aqueduct Reach 2B and one is in Aqueduct Reach 3). The other four poles are at sites in Fresno County (one is in Aqueduct Reach 5, and three are in Aqueduct Reach 6). Maintenance of the poles includes testing for structural integrity and treating against future decay. The following work will occur at each pole:

First, a 12-inch radius area will be excavated around the base of the pole; the excavation will be at least 20 inches deep and will be dug by hand. Once the area is excavated, the structural integrity of the pole will be tested by using a battery-powered drill to make up to three 7/8-inch diameter holes into the base of the pole. If the integrity of the wood from any of these drilled holes is questionable, then up to fifteen 9/16-inch diameter holes will be made along the length of the pole to determine the amount of damage. Any poles not considered to be structurally sound will be reported to PG&E for further assessment.

If the pole is considered structurally sound, it will be treated with a chemical product that protects against wood decay and insect attack. To prevent potential chemical spills and leaks, the product will be applied into the 7/8-inch holes from calibrated containers with a squirt tip applicator. After the holes have been filled with the chemical product, a wood preservative paste will be brushed onto the pole from a point about 3 inches above the ground surface and down to about 20 inches below the ground surface. A paper-based backing will be applied over the preservative to aid in absorption of the paste into the pole and to prevent the paste from leaching into the soil. This backing will extend from a point about 4 inches above the ground surface to about 20 inches below the ground surface.

Once the pole has been treated, the drill holes will be sealed using plastic plugs and the excavated area will be backfilled and compacted. PG&E will benefit from this work.

Exempt/Suspend Status:

- Ministerial (§21080[b][1]; 15268)
- Declared Emergency (Proclamation of a State of Emergency Due to Drought)
- Emergency Project (Public Resources Code §21080[b][4]; California Code of Regulations §15269[c])
- Categorical Exemption: 15301 - (Existing Facilities) and 15305(b) – (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations—Issuance of minor encroachment permits).
- Statutory Exemptions:

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: Work consists of maintaining existing PG&E power pole in DWR's right of way. Work will occur in areas with an average slope of less than 20 percent and no changes in land use or density will occur. The project will not expand existing use. DWR will issue an encroachment permit for completion of this work. Categorical Exemption 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15305 (b) (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations – Issuance of Minor Encroachment Permits) apply.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Department of Water Resources

Contact Person: Cody Nelson

Telephone: 209-827-5190

Signature: Cody Nelson **Date:** 10/30/2023 **Title:** Planner Scheduler/UC Supv.

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant