

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
SLFD, 31770 Gonzaga Road
Gustine, CA 95322

Lead Agency: California Department of Water Resources

Project Title: California Aqueduct Reach 3 Western Area Power Administration Power Pole Maintenance

Project Location City & County: Merced County

Project Location – Specific: Work will occur on the right side (R) of Reach 3 of the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct) at milepost (MP) 72.89 and MP 83.26R. All work will take place in the Department of Water Resources right-of-way (ROW). The work site at MP 72.89R is located about 150 feet southwest of the intersection of the Aqueduct and Interstate 5 and contains one utility power pole; the work site at MP 83.26R is located about 1.04 miles southeast of the intersection of the Aqueduct and Mervel Avenue and contains one utility power pole and one meter pole. Both work sites are in Merced County.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) requested encroachment permission to perform inspections of existing utility power poles and meter poles in the DWR ROW. If the poles pass these inspections, they will be treated to protect against decay.

WAPA will first check each pole by sight for obvious damage. Then, a hammer will be used to strike the pole to inspect for decay by sound. If decay is suspected, but not detected by sight or by sound, 5/16-inch or 3/8-inch diameter holes will be drilled into the pole to inspect for decay. If the pole appears to be in acceptable condition, a 3-foot-long by 3-foot-wide by 2-foot-deep excavation will then be made to expose the pole's base for a belowground inspection. The belowground inspection involves using hand tools to inspect the surface of the exposed portion of the pole for damage and drilling three 13/16-inch diameter holes into the exposed section of the pole to check for internal decay. If the pole is still determined to be in acceptable condition, it will be treated to protect against decay. This treatment will involve applying a fumigant and a preservative chemical.

The fumigant will be inserted into all drill holes that were made during the inspections, and the drill holes will be closed with a plastic plug. If treatable internal decay was detected during the inspections, one 13/16-inch diameter hole will be drilled into the pole above the internal decay pocket and another will be drilled into the pole below the internal decay pocket. Then, those drill holes will be filled with fumigant and closed with plastic plugs. All fumigants will be applied as specified by the manufacturer's guidelines.

To apply the preservative chemical, the pole will first be cleaned from 24 inches below ground line to three inches above ground line. Then, the preservative will be brushed onto the cleaned portions of the pole and a polyethylene-backed kraft paper wrapping will be applied over the chemical to prevent it from leaching into the soils. Alternatively, a treated pole bandage may be applied to the cleaned pole instead of applying preservative and wrapping. These chemicals and wrappings will be applied as specified by the manufacturer's guidelines.

Following treatment, the excavation will be backfilled and the pole will be marked with a noncorrosive metal tag. WAPA 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 WAPA utility power and meter poles in the DWR's ROW. 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: DWR

Contact Person: Cody Nelson

Telephone: 209-827-5190

Signature: Cody Nelson **Date:** 12/6/2023 **Title:** Planner Scheduler/UC Supv.

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant