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State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Ste C-220
Ontario, CA 91764
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
VALERIE TERMINI, Acting Director

To:
Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
CEQA Submit

From:
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Ste. C-220
Ontario, CA 91764
Contact: Andy Chambers, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)
Andrew.Chambers@wildlife.ca.gov
Phone: (909) 758-6435

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Project Title: TD1953883 Desert Front Circle 12kV Covered Conductor Project (California Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit No. 1927-ITP-2025-054-06 (ITP))

Project Location (San Bernardino): The Project is located south of Desert Front Road and west of Highway 2 in unincorporated San Bernardino County, near the community of Wrightwood. The Project will occur within a 25-foot radius around a utility pole (Pole 2263703E) at approximately 34.376462 latitude, -117.609095 longitude.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has issued an ITP (No. 1927-ITP-2025-054-06), pursuant to Section 1927.3 of the Fish and Game Code to Southern California Edison.

The Project is comprised of a single wood utility pole replacement on the Circle 12kV distribution line. The existing wood pole will be replaced with a new wood pole and caisson (12-gauge steel casing) within 1 foot of the existing location. The caisson will be installed using a truck-mounted auger and tracked backhoe. Project Activities include overland travel of vehicles and equipment, staging/laydown, and excavation within a 0.028-acre area.

The Project will encroach upon four western Joshua trees (Yucca brevifolia) which are protected under the WJTCA and the California Endangered Species Act. The WJTCA ITP referenced above as issued by CDFW authorizes incidental take of western Joshua tree that may occur as a result of Project implementation.

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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
1927-ITP-2025-054-06
January 27, 2027

Public Agency Approving Project: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Person or Public Agency Carrying Out Project:
Southern California Edison
Hazem Gabr, Environmental Partners & Planners, Principal Manager
(626) 302-7608
Hazem.Gabr@sce.com
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue, Rosemead CA, 91770

Exempt Status: On 1/29/2026, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Lead Agency, determined that the Project is statutorily exempt pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 15269(c).

Reasons why project is exempt: See Attachment.

CDFW Contact Person: Andy Chambers, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), Andrew.Chambers@wildlife.ca.gov, (909) 758-6435

Signature: DocuSigned by: Heidi Calvert CAEE4779B63E4A3... *Date:* 1/29/2026

Heidi Calvert, Regional Manager

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ATTACHMENT TO NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Southern California Edison
TD1953883 Desert Front Circle 12kV Covered Conductor Project

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has approved a Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for Southern California Edison's (SCE) TD1953883 Desert Front Circle 12kV Covered Conductor Project. SCE requested authorization for "take" of western Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) associated with their covered conductor project (CCP) work occurring along the Desert Front Circle 12kV distribution line.

CDFW approved the TD1953883 Desert Front Circle 12kV Covered Conductor Project ITP relying on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statutory exemption because it involves "specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency." (Pub. Res. Code, § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269.) For the purposes of CEQA, "'Emergency' means a sudden, unexpected occurrence, involving a clear and imminent danger, demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential public services. 'Emergency' includes such occurrences as fire, flood, earthquake, or other soil or geologic movements, as well as such occurrences as riot, accident, or sabotage." (Cal. Pub. Res. Code, §21060.3.) The TD1953883 Desert Front Circle 12kV Covered Conductor Project falls within the class because it involves replacing and reinforcing a wood pole that has deteriorated and replacing bare wire conductors with covered conductors to significantly reduce the risk of electrical faults and wildfires. Covered conductors are insulated with a protective layer that prevents direct contact between conductors and the environment, helping prevent faults that can lead to overheating and prevent sparks from igniting dry vegetation in areas prone to wildfires.

At least eight of California's twenty most destructive wildfires had either electrical or power line causes, and all eight of those fires occurred within the last ten years. This Project is located within Tier 3 of the California Public Utilities Commission's Fire-Threat Map, which outlines areas where there is extreme fire risk, including a likelihood and potential impacts on people and property from utility-related fires. Given the high risk of wildlife that electrical and power lines can pose, the location of this project within an area of extreme fire risk, and the focus of this project on restoring the structural integrity of utility poles and replacing bare wire power lines to reduce the potential for wildlife, CDFW has determined that this Project involves specific actions necessary to prevent a wildfire emergency and is thus exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080, subdivision (b)(4).