

Fires ignite energy emergency

An energy transmission emergency has been declared for Southern California by the California Independent System Operator Corp as a result of widespread fires in the region. California ISO says the most dramatic impact from the fires is currently in San Diego, where multiple lines are no longer in service. So far, 24 different lines in the county have been affected by the fire, according to California ISO spokesman Greg Fishman. Some of the affected lines have been repaired. "The transmission grid that we operate in San Diego has suffered losses and it has the opportunity to impact our ability to deliver power to the region," says Fishman. California ISO is "getting the word out that the situation is getting pretty serious and it gives us the authority to act quickly to take steps that we would need to take to keep the grid up if we lose more lines", he adds. San Diego Gas & Electric spokesman Art Larson says one of the region's two main energy transmission corridors has been severed. The Southwest Power Link from Arizona to San Diego has not been in operation for around a week as a result of damage caused by the fire. SDG&E reports that the power grid is operating near maximum capacity and is urging customers to conserve energy if at all possible. Firefighters have given up battling some of the worst blazes, as 880,000 people flee the firestorm that is threatening 68,000 homes. Up to 1600 properties have been destroyed. US President George Bush has declared an emergency, but California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is urging him to go further and declare a "major disaster", which would trigger federal help. "This disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capability of the state and local governments," Schwarzenegger says. More than 170,000 hectares have been scorched, and the state government has put economic losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

[Source: esaa]