



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 2/5/2018

Agenda Placement: 7F

## Napa County Legislative Subcommittee Board Agenda Letter

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**TO:** Napa County Legislative Subcommittee  
**FROM:** Molly Rattigan for Minh Tran - County Executive Officer  
County Executive Office  
**REPORT BY:** Molly Rattigan, Deputy County Executive Officer - 253-4112  
**SUBJECT:** SB 901

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

County Executive Officer seeks discussion and possible action on SB 901 (Dodd) that would require investor- and municipally-owned electric utilities to include in their wildfire mitigation plans, policies and procedures for determining if, when and where to de-energize a power line in extreme weather events, for the purpose of preventing a wildfire.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

SB 901 (Dodd) would require investor-owned, publicly-owned and cooperative electric utilities to include a set of its own policies and procedures it would utilize to determine if, when and where to temporarily de-energize a power line in its service area as a means to preventing an ignition of a wildfire during an extreme weather event.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact?                      No

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

Wildfires caused by power lines are not uncommon. Among the more notable fires have been the Witch, Butte, and most recently, the Napa and Sonoma wildfires, which cumulatively have burned hundreds of thousands of acres and destroyed thousands of structures.

There is proof or evidence that these, and many other California wildfires over the years have been caused by downed or arcing electric power lines during extreme weather events. Wildfires not only endanger life and property, they have devastating financial impacts in the community, and to the utility. The Napa and Sonoma wildfires have resulted in an estimated \$10 billion in property damage, and the loss of over 40 lives. The 2007 Witch fire in San Diego has led to more than \$2 billion in settlement payments by San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). These are just two of many examples of the human and fiscal toll wildfires cause. As California's population grows, and development continues to move farther from urban boundaries, the wildland-urban interface expands. Recent estimates are that 3.6 million California homes are now located in higher risk interface areas.

Despite the growing risk, electric utilities have an obligation to serve, which requires them to build transmission and distribution lines in these high risk areas. In recognition of the wildfire threat a downed power line may present, at least one utility has taken steps to evaluate the risk whenever an extreme weather event is predicted to occur in its service area. SDG&E has developed a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to determine if, when and where it may need to temporarily de-energize a power line to prevent the possibility of triggering a wildfire, and has done so, 17 times. Public safety, particularly in high risk urban-wildfire interface areas, would be enhanced if all electric utilities adopted similar policies and procedures pertaining to temporarily shutting down power lines during extreme weather events.

CSAC: Pending  
RCRC: No position

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

A . SB 901

Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Molly Rattigan