

Wildfires yesterday shut down power line from Palo Verde hub to San Diego

From Reuters

High winds fanned flames in seven Southern California counties and caused a major power line from Arizona to be de-energized on Monday, but the region's power grid still was able serve more than 99 percent of state utility customers, power company and state officials said.

The major Southwest Powerlink 500-kilovolt transmission line was shut down to support firefighting efforts, said its owner, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), the utility subsidiary of Sempra International. Southwest Powerlink brings power from the Palo Verde hub to San Diego. Power deliveries were maintained as the utility kicked "peaker" units into service.

The wildfires in San Diego County were hindering linemen's efforts to get to the Southwest Powerlink, but the Santa Ana winds were expected to lessen enough today to allow the line to be cleaned of residue from the wildfires and returned to operation, said SDG&E spokeswoman Jennifer Briscoe.

SDG&E had about 30,000 electricity customers without service at midday Monday in 71 areas of San Diego County, all of them off because of the wildfires, Briscoe said.

The utility still is asking customers to conserve electricity by avoiding the use of major appliances until evening hours and shutting down air conditioners, unless the health of a resident is dependent on the filtration of pollutants that some cooling systems provide.

Southern California Edison, a subsidiary of Edison International, said about 18,250 residential and business customers were without electricity on Monday morning. Since the windy storm began about 2 a.m. Sunday, a total of about 493,000 customers had experienced at least momentary power outages, it said.

Municipal utility Los Angeles Department of Water and Power said 1,300 customers were without power Monday morning. Pacific Gas & Electric in northern and central California reported no transmission or power outages.

Other transmission lines were being watched. The Pacific DC Intertie, which brings power down from the Pacific Northwest to Southern California, was operating at about 1,300 megawatts (MW) flow, down from 3,000 MW before the fire.

Lines being closely watched included two from the San Onofre nuclear power station north of San Diego, as wildfires burned beneath them. As of Monday afternoon, the lines were expected to remain in operation.

"We're managing the situation so far just fine," Gregg Fishman, spokesman for the California Independent System Operator, which oversees the state's power grid, said. "The fire situation obviously is very dynamic with 60 mph winds and higher in gusts."

Fishman and officials from the utilities said that being in good form is not a guarantee that a shift of a wildfire or gust of wind won't cause unexpected problems.