

Power link from Palo Verde hub to San Diego restored

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California wildfires created an electricity "island" of San Diego County on Wednesday but a major blackout was averted when a key power transmission line to Arizona resumed operation in the afternoon, San Diego Gas & Electric Co. (SDG&E) said.



The Southwest Powerlink from the Palo Verde hub is one of two major transmission corridors that connect San Diego County to the U.S. Western power grid. It had been out of service since Sunday when wildfires approached it.

The other major link in the north part of the SDG&E service territory ceased operation about the same time the Southwest Powerlink restarted, said Rachel Laing, spokeswoman for SDG&E. The other link was back in operation by early Wednesday evening.

SDG&E and the California Independent System Operator (ISO), the manager of the state power grid, still are asking consumers to conserve power because the Southwest Powerlink is not yet up to full electricity flow rates and wildfires remained unpredictable and could imperil power lines again.

"The winds are cooperating a little better at least with regard with the fires that are burning near our transmission lines," said Stephanie McCorkle, a spokesperson for the ISO.

Although firefighters worked to protect power lines and other utility infrastructure where possible, SDG&E reported several transmission lines in the areas of Miguel Mountain and Rancho Santa Fe were knocked out of service.

The ISO confirmed San Diego County continued to be the hardest hit, with some lines significantly damaged and hundreds of transmission and distribution structures destroyed. SDG&E officials recalled the Cedar fires of 2003, after which the utility had to replace about 3,000 poles, and said this fire appears to have caused even more damage. [See related story on APS assistance efforts.](#)

To help ease the crisis, every power plant within the SDG&E area was called upon Wednesday, even those that are 50 years old and only run during the highest demand, said Michael Niggli, Chief Operating Officer, SDG&E. The company also imported power yesterday on a 230-kilovolt link to Mexico, even though the power line was under threat of being de-energized due to fire.

Yesterday about 20,000 SDG&E-area homes and businesses were without power, down from 33,000 on Tuesday. And the Southern California Edison (SoCalEd) area to the north only had about 2,000 customers without power, even though wires were down in more than 300 locations and hundreds of poles would have to be replaced.