

Docket : A.23-08-013  
Exhibit Number : CA-02  
Commissioner : Alice Reynolds  
Admin. Law Judge : John Larsen  
Witness : Aaron Louie



**PUBLIC ADVOCATES OFFICE**  
**CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**Testimony on Prudence of Operations**  
**for**  
**Thomas Fire and Debris Flow**  
**Cost-Recovery Application**

**Prior History of Utility-Related Wildfires**

**PUBLIC**

San Francisco, California  
June 6, 2024

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. SCE’S WILDFIRE HISTORY .....	1
III. MAP OF HISTORICAL WILDFIRES.....	5
IV. MALIBU CANYON FIRE .....	7
V. WITNESS QUALIFICATIONS – AARON LOUIE.....	10
ATTACHMENTS	

1                   **PRIOR HISTORY OF UTILITY-RELATED WILDFIRES**

2   **I.     INTRODUCTION**

3           This testimony pertains to Southern California Edison Company’s (SCE or  
4 Edison) application to recover costs associated with the December 2017 Thomas Fire  
5 and subsequent debris flows (Application 23-08-013).

6           This testimony presents the analyses of the Public Advocates Office at the  
7 California Public Utilities Commission Public Advocates Office (Cal Advocates)  
8 regarding the prudence of SCE’s practices and operations in the time period leading  
9 up to the Thomas Fire. The Thomas Fire resulted from ignitions at two locations (the  
10 Anlauf and Koenigstein ignitions).

11          This testimony relates specifically to Exhibit SCE-03, SCE’s testimony on  
12 prudence of operations, and Exhibit SCE-04, SCE’s testimony on external factors.

13   **II.    SCE’S WILDFIRE HISTORY**

14          SCE has been responsible for its infrastructure igniting multiple wildfires  
15 within its service territory prior to the December 4, 2017 Thomas Fire. Table 1 below  
16 details SCE’s history of wildfires related to its equipment, and the resulting damages,  
17 in the twenty years leading up to the Thomas Fire.

**Table 1:  
SCE Wildfire History from 1998 to 2017<sup>1 2</sup>**

<b>Date the fire ignited</b>	<b>Name of the wildfire</b>	<b>Estimated Fire Size (acres)</b>	<b>Number of structures damaged or destroyed</b>
8/31/1998	Yankee Fire	1,100	0
2/9/2002	Green Fire	2,400	0
7/1/2002	Birch Fire	2,600	0
1/6/2003	Unknown name	1,500	3
4/24/2003	Lundy Canyon Fire	700	0
12/3/2006	Happy Camp Fire	14,000	7
12/8/2006	Sycamore Fire	367	0
4/29/2007	Kernville/James Fire	2,200	0
9/3/2007	Mariposa Fire	178	0
10/20/2007	Ranch Fire	58,000	9
10/21/2007	Malibu Canyon Fire	4,400	14
10/22/2007	Grass Valley Fire	1,250	200
11/14/2008	Sayre Fire	11,262	751
8/27/2009	Cottonwood Fire	2,409	0
6/19/2011	Canyon Fire	190	0
8/28/2011	Three Slashes Fire	5,100	0
7/7/2012	Fish Fire	1,103	0
4/8/2013	Goodenough Fire	148	1
8/18/2014	Way Fire	4,045	14
2/6/2015	Round Fire	7,000	48
6/4/2016	Old Fire	516	0
6/24/2016	Marina Fire	654	0
7/8/2016	Fort Fire	554	0
8/18/2016	Rey Fire	32,606	1
5/15/2017	Bravo Fire	288	0
6/10/2017	Bodfish Fire	206	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>154,776</b>	<b>1,048</b>

Source: SCE’s responses to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, question 11.

<sup>1</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, question 11, included Excel attachment “*CONFIDENTIAL SCE TKM Historical Fires*”, March 27, 2024. The Excel attachment included information that SCE marked as confidential; however, Cal Advocates does not utilize the specific information that SCE deems confidential within Table 1 or this testimony.

<sup>2</sup> SCE’s 2023-2025 Base WMP R0, Table 5-4: Catastrophic Electrical Corporation Wildfires, March 27, 2023, at 46-47.

1 The data in Table 1 was provided by SCE in response to a Cal Advocates data  
2 request.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, Cal Advocates requested “a list of wildfires in the period from  
3 1998 through 2017 where either SCE or a fire agency determined that SCE’s  
4 equipment was likely responsible for igniting the fire” *and* where one or more of these  
5 criteria applies:

- 6 • The fire burned at least 100 acres,
- 7 • The fire destroyed five or more structures,
- 8 • The fire caused any serious injuries or fatalities, and/or
- 9 • SCE incurred liabilities exceeding \$5 million.<sup>4</sup>

10 SCE provided a list of the wildfires that occurred and were linked to its  
11 facilities across two decades from 1998 to 2017.<sup>5</sup> The wildfires in Table 1 meet the  
12 specified criteria. Table 1 is not a complete history of all the utility-related wildfires  
13 that may have occurred from 1998 to 2017.

14 Furthermore, Table 1 may not be an exhaustive list of wildfires that meet the  
15 criteria stated above: SCE states that it conducted a review of available records, but  
16 “there could be wildfires responsive to this question that did not meet the established  
17 criteria for an [Electric Safety Incident Report] at the time.”<sup>6</sup>

18 SCE identified twenty-six different utility-related wildfires across the 1998-  
19 2017 period that met these criteria.<sup>7</sup> These wildfires damaged or destroyed an  
20 estimated 1,048 structures and burned an estimated total of 154,776 acres.<sup>8</sup> Based on

---

<sup>3</sup> SCE also provides a similar, but narrower, list of historical wildfires in its 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan. SCE’s 2023-2025 Base WMP R0, Table 5-4: Catastrophic Electrical Corporation Wildfires, March 27, 2023, at 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> Data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, Question 11, March 13, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, Question 11, March 27, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22, Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

1 Cal Advocates’ analysis, nine of the wildfires (more than a third) occurred within a  
2 five-year period leading up to the Thomas Fire. Furthermore, SCE experienced two  
3 wildfires (the Bravo Fire and the Bodfish Fire) approximately six months before the  
4 Thomas Fire.<sup>2</sup>

5 Several of the fires listed in Table 1 were notably destructive. These examples,  
6 drawn from Table 1 above, are significant:

- 7 • The Happy Camp Fire (2006) burned 14,000 acres, and  
8 damaged or destroyed 7 structures.<sup>10</sup>
- 9 • The Ranch Fire (2007) burned 58,000 acres, and damaged or  
10 destroyed 9 structures.<sup>11</sup>
- 11 • The Grass Valley Fire (2007) burned 1,250 acres, and  
12 damaged or destroyed 200 structures.<sup>12</sup>
- 13 • The Sayre Fire (2008) burned 11,262 acres, destroyed 604  
14 structures, damaged 147 structures.<sup>13, 14</sup>
- 15 • The Round Fire (2015) burned 7,000 acres, destroyed 43  
16 structures, and damaged 5 structures.<sup>15, 16</sup>
- 17 • The Rey Fire (2016) burned 32,606 acres, and damaged or  
18 destroyed 1 structure.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> SCE’s 2023-2025 Base WMP R0, Table 5-4: Catastrophic Electrical Corporation Wildfires,  
March 27, 2023, at 46-47.

<sup>15</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> SCE’s 2023-2025 Base WMP R0, Table 5-4: Catastrophic Electrical Corporation Wildfires,  
March 27, 2023, at 46-47.

<sup>17</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-22,  
Question 11, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical\_Fires, March 27, 2024.

1 SCE also provided confidential information about the financial liabilities that it  
2 incurred due to the wildfires listed in Table 1. The information is available in the  
3 confidential supporting attachment to this testimony.

### 4 **III. MAP OF HISTORICAL WILDFIRES**

5 This section describes where previous utility-related wildfires in SCE’s  
6 territory ignited. In response to Cal Advocates’ data requests, SCE provided the  
7 approximate ignition locations of 22 utility-related wildfires in its service territory  
8 during the 1998-2017 period.<sup>18, 19</sup> Using the provided data, Cal Advocates mapped  
9 these previous wildfires over a map of SCE’s service territory. Figure 1 shows a red  
10 dot for the ignition location of each utility-related wildfire prior to the 2017 Thomas  
11 Fire and yellow dots for the two Thomas Fire ignition locations. For this analysis, Cal  
12 Advocates used the Anlauf and Koenigstein ignition locations that are identified in the  
13 investigation report by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
14 (CAL FIRE) and the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD).<sup>20, 21</sup> The inner circle  
15 in Figure 1, shows all the previous wildfires that occurred within a 50-mile radius of  
16 the Anlauf and Koenigstein ignition sites. The outer circle shows all wildfires that  
17 occurred within a 100-mile radius.

---

<sup>18</sup> SCE’s response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-35, question 2, included Excel attachment “*CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical Fires 35 Q2*”, May 1, 2024. The Excel attachment included information that SCE marked as confidential; however, Cal Advocates does not utilize the specific information that SCE deems confidential within this testimony.

<sup>19</sup> Of the 26 fires shown in Table 1, SCE provided the latitude and longitude of ignition for 22 fires. SCE was not able to identify the ignition location for the remaining 4 fires.

<sup>20</sup> Ex. SCE-02, Vol. The Anlauf and Koenigstein Ignitions Testimony, Appendix B Anlauf Fire Agency Report, at p. B44.

<sup>21</sup> Ex. SCE-02, Vol. The Anlauf and Koenigstein Ignitions Testimony, Appendix C Koenigstein Fire Agency Report, at p. C22.

**Figure 1:  
Locations of SCE's Previous Wildfires<sup>22 23 24</sup>**



<sup>22</sup> SCE's response to data request CalAdvocates-SCE-A2308013-35, Question 2, Excel Attachment CONFIDENTIAL\_SCE\_TKM\_Historical Fires 35 Q2, May 1, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Ex. SCE-02, Vol. The Anlauf and Koenigstein Ignitions Testimony, Appendix B Anlauf Fire Agency Report, at B44.

<sup>24</sup> Ex. SCE-02, Vol. The Anlauf and Koenigstein Ignitions Testimony, Appendix C Koenigstein Fire Agency Report, at C22.

1           Based on a geospatial analysis, eight of the twenty-six 1998-2017 wildfires  
2 occurred within a 50-mile radius of the Anlauf and Koenigstein ignition locations.  
3 One wildfire (the Goodenough Fire in 2013) occurred approximately eight miles away  
4 from the Anlauf ignition.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, an additional seven wildfires occurred  
5 within a 100-mile radius of the Thomas Fire ignitions.

6           Figure 1 shows that the area where the Anlauf and Koenigstein ignitions  
7 occurred was near previous utility-related wildfires that caused significant damage.

#### 8 **IV. MALIBU CANYON FIRE**

9           The 2017 Thomas Fire was not the first occasion where SCE dealt with a  
10 catastrophic wildfire that was related to its electrical facilities. The Malibu Canyon  
11 Fire that transpired in October 2007 was caused by three SCE poles falling during a  
12 Santa Ana windstorm.<sup>26</sup> The Malibu Canyon Fire caused significant damage: it  
13 burned 3,836 acres, destroyed 14 structures, and damaged an additional 19  
14 structures.<sup>27, 28</sup>

15           After the Malibu Canyon Fire, the Commission opened Order Instituting  
16 Investigation (OII) 09-01-018.<sup>29</sup> In I.09-01-018, SCE and the Commission’s Safety  
17 and Enforcement Division (SED) negotiated a Settlement Agreement, which the  
18 Commission approved in Decision (D.) 13-09-028.

19           In the Settlement Agreement, SCE admitted to the following violations:

---

<sup>25</sup> Cal Advocates’ conducted analysis and developed an Excel workpaper titled “Distances Between Thomas and SCE Fires.” The workpaper compared the distances between Thomas Fire ignition locations (Anlauf and Koenigstein) and SCE’s previous wildfires.

<sup>26</sup> *Decision Conditionally Approving The Southern California Edison Company Settlement Agreement Regarding the Malibu Canyon Fire* (D.13-09-028), September 19, 2013, at 48.

<sup>27</sup> D.13-09-028 at 48 (Finding of Fact 1).

<sup>28</sup> Safety and Enforcement Division, *Report on Southern California Edison Company’s Compliance with the Malibu Area Safety Enhancements Protocol and Remediation Requirements in Decision 13-09-028*, (SED Report on SCE’s Compliance), December 2022, at 1.

<sup>29</sup> D.13-09-028 at 4.

- 1 • Violation of General Order (GO) 95 safety factor  
2 requirements, as two of SCE’s poles were found to be non-  
3 compliant;<sup>30</sup>
- 4 • Violation of Public Utilities Code § 451, as SCE failed to take  
5 “prompt action to prevent NextG from attaching facilities to  
6 joint poles after an SCE employee determined” that the  
7 proposed attachments would cause “several poles in Malibu  
8 Canyon to be overloaded;”<sup>31</sup> and
- 9 • Three violations of Rule 1.1 of the Commission Rules of  
10 Practice and Procedure, as SCE withheld pertinent  
11 information from the Commission.<sup>32, 33</sup>

12 The Settlement Agreement adopted by the Commission required SCE to pay  
13 \$37 million.<sup>34</sup> This amount included \$20 million in penalties to the State of  
14 California General Fund and \$17 million for shareholder-funded remedial actions  
15 (including pole loading assessments and resulting pole remediation) related to the  
16 violations that led to the Malibu Canyon Fire occurrence.<sup>35, 36</sup>

17 Pursuant to D.13-09-028, SCE performed pole-loading assessments in Malibu  
18 Canyon and surrounding areas according to the Malibu Area Safety Enhancements

---

<sup>30</sup> D.13-09-028 at 48 (Finding of Fact 2) and Appendix A: Settlement Agreement at A-4.

<sup>31</sup> D.13-09-028 at 48 (Finding of Fact 2) and Appendix A: Settlement Agreement at A-4.

<sup>32</sup> D.13-09-028 at 48 (Finding of Fact 2) and Appendix A: Settlement Agreement at A-5.

<sup>33</sup> SED Report on SCE’s Compliance, December 2022, at 1-2. SED found that SCE provided “incomplete and/or misleading accident reports, data responses, and testimony.”

<sup>34</sup> D.13-09-028, Appendix A: Settlement Agreement at A-6.

<sup>35</sup> D.13-09-028 at 49 (Findings of Fact 5 and 8), 52 (Ordering Paragraph 5), and Appendix A: Settlement Agreement at A-6.

<sup>36</sup> SED Report on SCE’s Compliance, December 2022, at 2. SED states that “SCE also agreed to pay a fine of \$20 million and to provide an additional \$17 million to assess pole compliance with GO 95 in the Malibu area.”

1 Protocol.<sup>37, 38</sup> In its final report on SCE’s compliance with D.13-09-028, SED found  
2 that:

3 In total, 8,728 poles were assessed. 6,505 poles (75%)  
4 were found to be compliant and 2,223 poles (25%)  
5 were found to be noncompliant with the safety factor  
6 standards. The noncompliance was caused by bending  
7 (1,978 poles or 89%), guy wire deficiencies (182 poles  
8 or 8%) and buckling (63 poles or 3%). The  
9 assessments resulted in 182 pole repairs and 2,035 pole  
10 replacements.<sup>39</sup>

11 SED’s findings show that a significant fraction of SCE’s poles in the Malibu Canyon  
12 area were not compliant with safety factor standards. Therefore, the three pole failures  
13 that led to the Malibu Canyon Fire were representative of a broader safety issue (at  
14 least in the Malibu Canyon area).

15

---

<sup>37</sup> D.13-09-028 at 51 (Ordering Paragraph 1) and Appendix A: Settlement Agreement, at A-6.

<sup>38</sup> D.13-09-028 at Exhibit A: Malibu Area Safety Enhancements Protocol at Exhibit A, at 3-4.

According to the Malibu Area Safety Enhancement Protocol, SCE will first assess all poles along Malibu Canyon Road from the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) to Mulholland Highway (Hwy). SCE will then assess the poles along Topanga Canyon Boulevard (Blvd) from the PCH to Old Topanga Road, and then along Old Topanga Road (Rd) to Mulholland Hwy. SCE will then assess the poles along Mulholland Hwy between Malibu Canyon Rd. and Old Topanga Rd. SCE will then assess additional poles in the Malibu area in the following order: along Latigo Canyon Rd. from PCH to Kanan Dume Rd; along Kanan Dume Rd from PCH to Mulholland Hwy; and along Mulholland Hwy from Kanan Dume Rd. to Malibu Canyon Rd.

<sup>39</sup> SED Report on SCE’s Compliance, December 2022, at 4.

1 **V. WITNESS QUALIFICATIONS – Aaron Louie**

2 My name is Aaron Louie. My business address is 505 Van Ness Avenue,  
3 San Francisco, California. I am employed by the Public Advocates Office (Cal  
4 Advocates) as a Public Utilities Regulatory Analyst III in the Safety Branch.

5 I received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration with a  
6 specialization in Accounting from the University of San Francisco in San Francisco.

7 Since joining the Public Advocates Office in October of 2019, I have worked  
8 on proceedings related to wildfire mitigation and energy safety, including the Public  
9 Safety Power Shutoff Rulemaking (R.18-12-005), and the Wildfire Mitigation Plan  
10 Rulemaking (R.18-10-007). I have also worked on San Diego Gas & Electric  
11 Company's (SDG&E) General Rate Case (A.22-05-016) and prepared testimony in  
12 that proceeding.

13 I have participated in proceedings regarding wildfire mitigation plans (WMPs)  
14 that are led by the California Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety since 2021 and,  
15 prior to that, the Wildfire Safety Division of the Commission. In particular, I served  
16 as Cal Advocates' lead analyst and prepared comments related to the WMPs of  
17 SDG&E and Liberty Utilities (CalPeco Electric) from 2022 through 2024.

18 This concludes my statement of qualifications and my prepared testimony.