

September 22, 2023

The Honorable City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Mail Stop 160

Attention: Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky
Chair, Energy and Environment Committee

Honorable Members:

Subject: Safety Protocols During Storm Events, and Practices that can be Implemented to Improve and Ensure Lineworker Safety and Related Matters – Council File No. 23-0320

On April 25, 2023, the Los Angeles City Council (Council) approved a motion by Councilmembers Traci Park and Tim McOsker related to existing safety protocols during storm events and practices that may be improved or implemented to ensure lineworker safety moving forward (Council File No. 23-0320). This letter provides a response to the questions raised in the motion.

Storm Restoration Background

During a storm event, the local weather and the number of customers without power are continuously monitored using a 24/7 customer-access dashboard, and a round-the-clock call center. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has a tiered emergency response structure that encompasses three levels. As each level of response is triggered, additional lineworker resources are deployed toward storm restoration efforts. During a major storm, all available resources are directed toward restoring power to our customers.

Existing Safety Protocols During Storm Events

Electrical work is inherently a high-hazard activity in the best of conditions, and LADWP takes considerable precautions to ensure worker safety at all times. During a major storm, restoration efforts are conducted on a 24-hour basis. Under such conditions, worker fatigue is a serious safety concern. As a result, LADWP policy limits lineworkers

to 16-hour shifts, with 8-hour breaks between shifts, which exceeds any state or federal regulatory standard. To maintain continuous coverage, crew starting times are staggered, which allows large jobs to be transitioned to new crews and the work to continue in a safe manner.

Storm damage can be highly unpredictable. Due to the unknown and unforeseen nature of conditions encountered for each job assigned during a storm, LADWP's safety policy states:

No employee shall undertake work which they are not physically, mentally, or technically qualified to perform. If any employee is assigned work that they do not consider themselves qualified for or feel that the work is unusually hazardous, they are responsible for notifying their supervisor and resolving the issue before attempting the work.

This safety rule allows employees to ask that a job be reassigned to an appropriate crew with the training, knowledge, and experience or for additional resources needed to complete each unique job. Employees are reminded that no job is so critical or urgent that it cannot be conducted safely.

Improved Practices During A Storm Event

As a result of the unprecedented winter storm season, LADWP reviewed the practices followed during a storm event, and substantial changes were made. LADWP has committed to having District Superintendents conduct meetings at each local yard to communicate and remind lineworkers and all employees of weather-related hazards, resources available, and job safety.

An employee suffered a serious injury conducting storm restoration work, which highlighted the need to retrain lineworkers in the importance of ensuring that all walking/working surfaces on elevated mobile equipment are kept clear of debris, and that employees maintain three points of contact with the provided hand holds when entering or exiting the bucket of such equipment. Lineworkers shall not carry any items in their hands while entering the bucket but will lower the bucket to the ground or use a handline to raise or lower tools and material. This speaks to the need to work carefully and not take shortcuts, and to balance the desire to restore power to customers as expeditiously as possible while ensuring work is performed safely.

LADWP has implemented additional crew safety visits during storm events. Supervisors will visit worksites and connect with crews to assess morale and fatigue. They are tasked with evaluating the job site to identify and correct any unsafe conditions and get direct feedback on any concerns or resources needed.

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Additionally, written and documented safety tailgate meetings are now required to discuss the hazards associated with each job during a storm, no matter how small. All crew members will come together to discuss the known and potential hazards, as well as how each hazard will be mitigated before work begins.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (213) 367-1338, or you may have your staff contact Mr. Matthew A. Hale, Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (213) 367-0751.

Sincerely,



Martin L. Adams
General Manager and Chief Engineer

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- c: The Honorable Tim McOsker, Vice Chair, Energy and Environment Committee
- The Honorable Nithya Raman, Member, Energy and Environment Committee
- The Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Member, Energy and Environment Committee
- The Honorable Eunisses Hernandez, Member, Energy and Environment Committee
- Mr. Eric Villanueva, Legislative Assistant, Energy and Environment Committee
- Dr. Frederick H. Pickel, Office of Public Accountability
- Board of Water and Power Commissioners
- Mr. Matthew A. Hale