

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

Undergrounding of Existing Overhead Utility Facilities

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Purpose

To provide a policy for the orderly and timely conversion of utilities from overhead to underground in the unincorporated area, in cooperation with the utility companies.

Background

On September 19, 1967, as a result of their Case No. 8209, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) adopted a rule requiring electric and telephone companies to initiate and participate in an active program to underground utilities in areas of general public benefit.

Underground Utility Districts

San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) Rule 20A and SBC (formerly Pacific Bell) Rule 32.A.1 state that the utilities will underground their existing overhead distribution facilities at their own expense along public roads and on public lands in areas commonly known as Underground Utility Districts (UUDs). To form a UUD, the governing body of the city or county in which distribution facilities are located must:

1. Determine, after consulting with the utilities and after holding a public hearing that such undergrounding is in the general public interest because it meets specific criteria set forth by the CPUC (eliminates heavy concentration of wires, is in an area of high vehicle or pedestrian traffic, or is related to a civic, recreational, or scenic area).
2. Adopt a resolution or ordinance creating the UUD, requiring that:
  - a. All existing and future overhead facilities will be placed underground.
  - b. Each property owner served will provide trench, conduit, and electric meter panel modifications as necessary to receive service from the underground facilities as soon as they are available.
  - c. The utilities will be authorized to discontinue overhead service to any customer who does not complete the required service conversion.

Allocations/Costs

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Each year, SDG&E allocates funds to underground its distribution facilities among the counties and cities in its service area in the same ratio as overhead customers within those jurisdictions bear to the total overhead system. Allocations are an agreement by SDG&E to spend up to a specific dollar amount each year for UUD projects. Upon the request of a city or county, SDG&E will also use allocations to pay for the installation of no more than 100 feet of each customer's electric service lateral and/or for the cost of each meter panel modification (excluding permit fees). SBC and cable TV companies underground their facilities within the same project boundary as SDG&E but are not required to allocate funds. For projects where Rules 20A and 32.A.1 do not apply, SDG&E (under Rule 20B) and SBC (under Rule 32.A.2) will share the cost to underground overhead facilities with affected customers provided a UUD is formed and/or all customers agree in writing to pay their fair share of conversion expenses. The cost to property owners may, if appropriate, be financed through an Assessment District.

UUD Program

On July 1, 1968, the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 3217 (New Series) to establish regulations and procedures for undergrounding of overhead utility facilities within UUDs. The Board authorized an Underground Utilities Advisory Committee (UUAC) to review projects that meet the criteria for undergrounding, to coordinate plans and construction of these projects, and to develop a long-range plan for undergrounding in the unincorporated area.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that:

1. An orderly program be maintained for undergrounding existing overhead utility lines in the unincorporated area under the CPUC Rules and Regulations.
2. Projects selected for undergrounding shall meet at least one of the following criteria required by the CPUC:
  - a. The undergrounding will avoid or eliminate an unusually heavy concentration of overhead utility facilities.
  - b. The road or right-of-way occupied by the facilities is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
  - c. The road or right-of-way adjoins or passes through a civic area, public recreation area, or an area of unusual scenic interest to the general public.

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d. The street or road or right-of-way is considered an arterial street or major collector as defined in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines.

3. In developing the program, priority consideration will be given to qualified projects involving:

a. County financed improvements of roads, parks, or other facilities that necessitate the relocation or construction of overhead utilities.

b. Undergrounding of utilities on improved County roads or in the vicinity of existing County facilities.

c. Community landscaping programs.

d. Requests by petition, signed by a majority of the property owners in an area, expressing a willingness to participate in the total cost of the project to the extent of 50 percent of the cost of such work.

e. Requests from civic groups.

4. The cost of the first 100 feet of electric trench and conduit and electric meter panel modification for each service conversion will be paid for by SDG&E under the terms of its Rule 20A.

5. Where projects do not meet the CPUC criteria, the Board of Supervisors will assist the conversion under SDG&E Rule 20B and SBC Rule 32.A.1 by establishing UUDs, provided property owners agree in writing to pay their fair share of the conversion cost and/or establish an Assessment Act District to fund the project.

Procedure

The UUAC will consist of one member from SDG&E, SBC, and each affected cable TV company, and two members from the County Department of Public Works consisting of the Utility Coordinator and the Chief of Special Districts, who chairs the group. The UUAC will meet periodically to develop the undergrounding program, to coordinate administration and construction of the various projects, and to make recommendations on specific projects to the Board of Supervisors.

The Department of Public Works will administer underground projects approved under this policy.

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Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-20.

Board Action

05-05-70 (57)

08-11-70 (63)

12-04-84 (18)

03-01-88 (97)

06-29-93 (61)

01-04-94 (3)

11-17-99 (11)

06-23-04 (12)

12-09-08 (33)

12-04-13 (13)

CAO Reference

1. Department of Public Works