

Vegetation Management
POLE CLEARING ACTIVITY
VEGETATION CLEARANCE EXEMPTIONS





	Vegetation Management	DOCUMENT SECURITY: INTERNAL
	Pole Clearing Activity: Vegetation Exemption Procedures	EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/18/2025
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1 Purpose

This document describes the procedures for regulatory and internal vegetation exemptions that apply to the Pole Clearing Program.

2 Applicability

This document is intended for use by:

- Vegetation Management contractors and Vegetation Management internal staff.
- Internal or external parties that require an understanding of the vegetation exemption process for accountability and compliance purposes.

3 Regulatory Requirements – Public Resources Code 4292

California Code of Regulations Title 14, §1254 defines the scope of PRC 4292 and provides minimum compliance standards.

3.1 California Code of Regulations Title 14, §1254: Minimum Clearance Provisions PRC 4292:


The firebreak clearances required by PRC 4292 are applicable within an imaginary cylindrical space surrounding each pole or tower on which a switch, fuse, transformer or lightning arrester is attached and surrounding each dead-end or corner pole, unless such pole or tower is exempt from minimum clearance requirements by provisions of 14, CCR, 1255 or PRC 4296. The radius of the cylindroid is 3.1 m (10 feet) measured horizontally from the outer circumference of the specified pole or tower with height equal to the distance from the intersection of the imaginary vertical exterior surface of the cylindroid with the ground to an intersection with a horizontal plane passing through the highest point at which a conductor is attached to such pole or tower. Flammable vegetation and materials located wholly or partially within the firebreak space shall be treated as follows:

- At ground level - remove flammable materials, including but not limited to, ground litter, duff and dead or desiccated vegetation that will allow fire to spread, and;
- From 0 - 2.4 m (0-8 feet) above ground level remove flammable trash, debris or other materials, grass, herbaceous and brush vegetation. All limbs and foliage of living trees shall be removed up to a height of 2.4 m (8 feet).
- From 2.4 m (8 feet) to horizontal plane of highest point of conductor attachment remove dead, diseased or dying limbs and foliage from living sound trees and any dead, diseased or dying trees in their entirety.

3.1.1 Vegetation definitions applied to CCR Title 14, §1254

The distinction of the general terms grass, herbaceous, brush, and trees identified in CCR Title 14, §1254 are applied as follows:

- Grass – volunteer, unmanaged grass that contributes to rapid fire spread
- Herbaceous – undesirable, noxious broad-leaves that contribute to rapid fire spread

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- Brush – volunteer, unmanaged woody vegetation, including live and dead shrubs, bushes, vines and stumps
- Trees – Woody plants that are 13 feet tall or more, typically have a single trunk, and are generally 3 inches or more in diameter at breast height

4 Regulatory Vegetation Exemptions – PRC 4292

San Diego Gas & Electric recognizes the following regulatory exemptions to vegetation removal practices in compliance with PRC 4292 requirements.

4.1 Public Resources Code 4295

A person is not required by Section 4292 or 4293 to maintain any clearing on any land if such person does not have the legal right to maintain such clearing, nor do such sections require any person to enter upon or to damage property which is owned by any other person without the consent of the owner of the property.


4.2 Public Resources Code 4296

Sections 4292 and 4293 do not apply if the transmission or distribution line voltage is 750 volts or less.

4.3 California Code of Regulations Title 14, §1255(a)(b)

The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4292 are NOT required around poles and towers, including line junctions, corner and dead-end poles and towers:

- (a) Where all conductors are continuous over or through a pole or tower; or
- (b) Where all conductors are not continuous over or through a pole or tower, provided, all conductors and subordinate equipment are of the types listed below and are properly installed and used for the purpose for which they were designed and manufactured;
 - (1) Compression connectors.
 - (2) Automatic connectors.
 - (3) Parallel groove connectors.
 - (4) Hot-line-tap or clamp connectors that were designed to absorb any expansion or contraction by applying spring tension on the main line or running conductor and tap connector.
 - (5) Fargo GA 300 series piercing connectors designed and manufactured for use with tree wire.
 - (6) Flat plate connectors installed with not less than two bolts.
 - (7) Tapered C-shaped member and wedge connectors.
 - (8) Solid blade single-phase bypass switches and solid blade single-phase disconnect switches associated with circuit reclosers, sectionalizers and line regulators.
 - (9) Equipment that is completely sealed and liquid filled.
 - (10) Current limiting, non-expulsion fuses.

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4.4 California Code of Regulations Title 14, §1255(c)

The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4292 are NOT required around poles and towers, including line junctions, corner and dead-end poles and towers:

(c) On the following areas, if fire will not propagate thereon;

- (1) Fields planted to row crops.
- (2) Plowed or cultivated fields.
- (3) Producing vineyards that are plowed or cultivated.
- (4) Fields in nonflammable summer fallow.
- (5) Irrigated pastureland.
- (6) Orchards of fruit, nut or citrus trees that are plowed or cultivated.
- (7) Christmas tree farms that are plowed or cultivated.
- (8) Swamp, marsh or bog land.

4.5 California Code of Regulations Title 14, §1255(d)

The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4292 are NOT required around poles and towers, including line junctions, corner and dead-end poles and towers:

(d) Where vegetation is maintained less than 30.48 cm (12 inches) in height, is fire resistant, and is planted and maintained for the specific purpose of preventing soil erosion and fire ignition.

4.5.1 Criteria for CCR Title 14, § 1255(d)


Vegetation exemptions under CCR Title 14, §1255(d) must remain free of dead, dying or diseased foliage and limbs. All dead, dying or diseased foliage and limbs must be removed, or the vegetation removed in its entirety. All debris and leaf litter material within or underneath exempt vegetation must be removed.

4.5.2 Examples of acceptable vegetation consistent with CCR Title 14, § 1255(d):

- Healthy, maintained and irrigated lawn
- Healthy ice plant
- Healthy groundcover
- Healthy, low growing succulents
- Healthy, low growing shrubs
- Healthy, low growing plants
- Healthy, low growing cacti

5 Internal vegetation exemptions

San Diego Gas & Electric recognizes a property owner's right to improve the value and aesthetics of their property where vegetation compatible with the surrounding utility infrastructure is planted within the prescribed area covered under PRC 4292.

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On a case-by-case basis, SDG&E and/or its contractors may evaluate vegetation planted by the property owner and determine that one or more of the following criteria are met and the vegetation may be exempt from removal:

- Vegetation that reduces risk of fire ignition
- Vegetation that reduces the likelihood of rapid fire spread
- Vegetation that is maintained at appropriate height to minimize ladder fuels
- Vegetation planted for purpose of soil erosion
- Vegetation planted for aesthetics or landscape improvements
- Vegetation planted to protect sensitive habitat
- Vegetation free from dead, dying, or diseases foliage and limbs
- Vegetation that is maintained in a landscaped setting and wholly surrounded by fire breaks; i.e. stone, concrete, asphalt, brick, tile

All vegetation exemption status are re-evaluated at least once annually to determine if the above criteria remain valid.

5.1 Landscape Exempt and Hardscape Exempt status criteria

On a case-by-case basis SDG&E and/or its contractors may determine that the entire pole area subject to PRC 4292 meets criteria for complete exemption from the vegetation clearance requirements of PRC 4292. In these cases, the pole record is updated to either Landscape Exempt or Hardscape Exempt.


- Landscape Exempt Requirements: Vegetation is of the type compatible with utility infrastructure, meets one or more of the criteria in Section 5.0, and is wholly surrounded by firebreaks, i.e. stone, concrete, asphalt, brick, tile, and/or bare soil void of flammable material.
- Hardscape Exemption Requirements: Entire pole area subject to PRC 4292 is made of hardscape material, i.e. stone, concrete, asphalt, brick, and tile, and there is an absence of all vegetation.

5.2 Examples of vegetation that may be exempt under the criteria in Section 5.0

The following are general examples, but not limited to, vegetation that may be exempt provided they continue to meet the criteria in Section 5. No dead, dying or diseased material is permitted and must be removed. All vegetation must be maintained at a safe height to minimize ladder fuels. All leaf litter and debris within or underneath such exempt vegetation must be removed.

Grasses (Used in maintained lawns/landscape settings):


- Agrostis (Bentgrass)
- Avena (Oats)
- Carex (Sedge Grass)
- Cynodon (Bermuda Grass)
- Digitaria (Crab Grass)
- Eremochloa (Centipede Grass)

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- Festuca (Fescue Grass)
- Hilaria (Curly Mesquite Grass)
- Leymus (Giant Wild Rye Grass)
- Lolium (Ryegrass)
- Poa (Kentucky Bluegrass)
- Stenotaphrum (St. Augustine Grass)

Herbaceous plants (Used in landscape settings)


- Achillea (Yarrow)
- Agapanthus (Lily-of-the-Nile)
- Ajuga (Bungleweed)
- Allium (Ornamental Onions)
- Anemone (Windflower)
- Aquilegia (Columbine)
- Artemesia (Mugwort)
- Asclepias (Milkweed)
- Aster (Coast Aster)
- Canna (Banana-of-the-Everglades)
- Cistus (Rockrose)
- Clinopodium (Yerba)
- Coleus (Hedgehog)
- Coreopsis (Calliopsis)
- Corethrogyne (Silver Carpet Aster)
- Crocus (Naked Ladies)
- Dichondra (Silver Ponysfoot)
- Echinacea (Daisy)
- Echinacea (Coneflower)
- Echium (Echium Webbii)
- Erigeron (Fleabane)
- Eschscholzia (Poppy)
- Fragaria (Beach Strawberry)
- Fuchsia (California)
- Gaillardia (Blanket Flowers)
- Geranium (Geranium)
- Gladiolus (Sword Lilly)
- Hedera (Ivy)
- Hemerocallis (Daylilly)

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- Heuchera (Coral Bells)
- Hibiscus (Rose of Sharon)
- Hyacinthus (Hyacinth)
- Iris (Iris)
- Lavandula (Lavender)
- Libertia (New Zealand Satin Flower)
- Lilium (Lillies)
- Liriope (Lilyturf)
- Lupinus (Lupine)
- Monardella (Russian River Coyote Mint)
- Narcissus (Daffodil)
- Nolina (Bear Grass)
- Oenothera (Evening Primrose)
- Paeonia (Peonies)
- Passiflora (Passionfruit)
- Pestemon (beardtongues)
- Phlox (Garden Flax)
- Phormium (New Zealand Flax)
- Plectranthus (Lobster Flower)
- Salvia (Sage)
- Stachys (Lamb's ear)
- Strelitzia (Bird of Paradise)
- Tagets (Marigolds)
- Tulipa (Tulip)
- Vinca (Periwinkles)

Shrubs (Used in Landscape settings)


- Acacia (Acacias)
- Arctostaphylos (Manzanita)
- Bougainvillea (Paper Flower)
- Bruxus (Boxwood)
- Caesalpinia (Bird of Paradise)
- Carrisa (Natal Plum)
- Ceanothus (California Lilac)
- Echium (Blue Thistle)
- Euryops (Bush Daisy)
- Ficus (Fig)
- Forsythia (Forsythia)
- Hibiscus (Rose Mallow)

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- Hydrangea (Horstensia)
- Ilex (Holly)
- Illicium (Ocala)
- Lavandula (Canary Island Lavender)
- Ligustrum (Privet)
- Lonicera (Honeysuckle)
- Mansoa (Garlicvine)
- Myrtus (Myrtle)
- Nerium (Oleander)
- Pandorea (Bowerplant)
- Plumbago (Plumbago)
- Pyracanthus (Firethorn)
- Rhamphiolepis (Indian-Hawthorn)
- Rosmarinus (Rosemary)
- Rhododendron (Azalea)
- Rosa (Roses)
- Rumbus (Raspberry, Blackberry)
- Syringa (Lilacs)
- Tecoma (Honeysuckle)
- Heteromoles (Toyon)
- Vaccinium (Blueberry, Cranberry, Huckleberry)
- Vitis (Grapevines)

Cacti/Succulents (Used in landscape settings)


- Agave (Century Plant)
- Aloe (Aloe)
- Aparentia (Red Apple Ice plant)
- Carpobrotus (Highway Ice plant)
- Cereus (Hedge Cactus)
- Crassula (Jade)
- Cylindropuntia (Cholla Cactus)
- Delosperma (Hardy Ice plant)
- Disphyma (Roundface Ice plant)
- Drosanthemum (Rosea Ice Plant)
- Dudleya (Fingertips)
- Echinocereus (Claret Cup Cactus)
- Echinopsis (Torch Cactus)
- Euphorbia (Pencil Plant)
- Ferocactus (Barrel Cactus)

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- Fouquieria (Ocotillo Cactus)
- Lampranthus (Trailing Ice Plant)
- Malephora (Coppery Mesemb)
- Mesembryanthemum (Heartleaf Ice plant)
- Opuntia (Prickly Pear Cactus)
- Portulacaria (Elephant Bush)
- Salicornia (Pickleweed)
- Tephrocactus (Spruce Cactus)
- Yucca (Dagger Plant)

Trees (Used in landscape settings)

- Acacia (Acacia)
- Acer (Maple)
- Albizia (Mimosa)
- Alnus (Alder)
- Araucaria (Star Pine)
- Bauhinia (Orchid)
- Betula (Birch)
- Brachychiton (Bottle tree/Lacebark)
- Calocedrus (Incense Cedar)
- Callistemon (Bottlebrush)
- Carya (Pecan)
- Cassia (Gold Medallion)
- Catalpa (Catalpa)
- Cedrus (Blue Atlas Cedar/Deodara)
- Ceiba (Floss Silk)
- Celtis (Hackberry)
- Ceratonia (Carob)
- Cinnamomum (Camphor)
- Citrus (Citrus)
- Cupaniopsis (Carrot Wood)
- Cupressus (Cypress)
- Eriobotrya (Loquat)
- Erythrina (Coral)
- Eugenia (Myrtles)
- Ficus (Fig/Rubber)
- Fraxinus (Ash)
- Ginkgo (Ginko)
- Gleditsia (Honey Locust)

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- Grevillea (Silk Oak)
- Jacaranda (Jacaranda)
- Juglans (Walnut)
- Juniperus (Juniper)
- Koelreuteria (Koelreuteria)
- Lagerstroemia (Crape Myrtle)
- Laurus (Bay Laurel)
- Liquidambar (Liquidambar)
- Liriodendron (Tulip tree)
- Lophostemon (Brisbane Box)
- Macadamia (Macadamia)
- Magnolia (Magnolia)
- Manihot (Cassava)
- Melaleuca (Paperbark)
- Morus (Mulberry)
- Myoporum (Myoporum)
- Olea (Olive)
- Parkinsonia (Palo Verde)
- Persea (Avocado)
- Pinus (Pine)
- Pistacia (Pistachio)
- Pittosporum (Pittosporum)
- Plantanus (Sycamore)
- Podocarpus (Podocarpus)
- Populus (Cottonwood/Aspen/Poplar)
- Prunus (Stonefruit)
- Pseudotsuga (Douglas Fir)
- Punica (Pomegranite)
- Pyrus (Evergreen Pear)
- Quercus (Oaks)
- Salix (Willow)
- Sambucus (Elderberry)
- Schefflera (Umbrella Tree)
- Schinus (California/Brazilian Pepper)
- Searsia (African Sumac)
- Strelitzia (Bird of Paradise)
- Tipuana (Tipu)
- Ulmus (Elm)

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Palms (Used in landscape settings)

- Archontophoenix (King Palm)
- Beaucarnea (Ponytail Palm)
- Cycas (Sago Palm)
- Phoenix (Pygmy Palm/Date Palm)
- Syagrus (Queen Palm)
- Washingtonia (Fan Palms)

6.0 Reference Documents


TABLE 1: REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Document Type	Document Name
External	Public Resources Code § 4292
External	Public Resources Code § 4295
External	Public Resources Code § 4296
External	California Code of Regulations Title 14 § 1254
External	California Code of Regulations Title 14 § 1255
External	California Power Line Fire Prevention Field Guide

7.0 Definitions and Acronyms

7.1 Acronyms

Abbreviation	Name
CCR	California Code of Regulations
PRC	Public Resources Code

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Abbreviation	Name
SDG&E	San Diego Gas & Electric

7.2 Definitions

Terms	Definitions
Exemption	Exempt from Public Resource Code 4292 requirements
Hardscape Exempt	Complete pole exemption status when radius consists of concrete, asphalt, brick, tile or stone.
Healthy	Vegetation Free of dead, dying, or diseased limbs or foliage
Landscape Exempt	Complete pole exemption status when radius consists wholly of exempt vegetation and radius is encircled by non-flammable hardscape material and/or bare soil void of flammable material.
Landscape Setting	An area designed for aesthetic purposes or erosion control
Low Growing	Vegetation under 12 inches in height consistent with CCR Title 14 §1255(d)
Maintained	Vegetation compatible with utility infrastructure that is preserved by property owner in a state of aesthetic value
Subject	Possessing attributes requiring PRC 4292 compliance requirements

8.0 Revision History and Approvals

Rev. Number	Description	By	Approved By	Date
1	Exemption criteria for pole clearing	Mike Powell	Michael Daleo	1/1/2025
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