

1                                   **Board of Forestry and Fire Protection**  
2                   **Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (14 CCR),**  
3                                   **Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 4, Article 4**  
4                                   **Utility Clearance Exemptions, 2019**

5  
6 § 1250. Purpose.

7 The purpose of Article 4 is to provide specific exemptions from: electric  
8 pole and tower firebreak clearance standards, electric conductor clearance  
9 standards and to specify when and where the standards apply.

10 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

11 Reference: Sections 4292-4296, Public Resources Code.

12  
13 § 1251. Definitions.

14 ~~The following definitions apply to this Article unless the context requires~~  
15 ~~otherwise.~~

16 ~~Defined word or phrase~~

17 "Conductor" means connector, a wire, or a combination of wires, and/or any  
18 other appliance designed and manufactured for use in the transmission and  
19 distribution of electrical current.

20 "Connector" means a device approved for energized electrical connections.

21 "Duff" means partially decayed leaves, needles, grass or other organic  
22 material accumulated on the ground.

23 "Fire Resistive" means coatings that meet or exceed testing standards  
24 equivalent to UL 94 V-0.

1 "Firebreak" means a natural or artificial barrier usually created by the  
2 removal or modification of vegetation and other flammable materials for the  
3 purpose of preventing spread of fire.

4 "Hot line tap or clamp connector" means a connector designed to be used with  
5 a Grip-All Clamp stick (Shotgun) for connecting equipment jumper or tap  
6 conductors to an energized main line or running connector.

7 "Load break tool" means a tool used to safely open or close a circuit by  
8 controlling the arc that is created, used in compliance with Federal  
9 Occupational Health and Safety Administration Standard 1926.960(k).

10 "Outer Circumference" means the exterior surface of a pole or tree at ground  
11 level or a series of straight lines tangent to the exterior of the legs of a  
12 tower at ground level. ~~(See Figure 1, this Article.)~~

13 "Qualified Electrical Worker (QEW)" means a worker who has received training  
14 in and has demonstrated skills and knowledge in the construction and  
15 operation of electric equipment and installations and the hazards involved.

16 "Self-supporting aerial cable" means an assembly of abrasion resistant  
17 insulated conductors supported by a messenger cable which is normally  
18 grounded, designed and manufactured to carry electrical current for  
19 installation on overhead polelines or other similar overhead structures.

20 "Tree wire" means ~~an insulated~~ a conductor covered with a high abrasion  
21 resistant, usually non-metallic, outer covering, designed and manufactured to  
22 carry electrical current for installation on overhead pole lines or other  
23 similar overhead structures.

24 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292-4293, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
25 Sections 4292-4296, Public Resources Code.

1 § 1252. Areas Where PRC 4292-4296 Apply in State Responsibility Areas.

2 The Director will apply PRC 4292-4296 in any mountainous land, forest covered  
3 land, brush covered land or grass covered land within State Responsibility  
4 Areas unless specifically exempted by 14 CCR 1255 and 1257.

5 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
6 Sections 4125-4128, 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code.

7  
8 § 1252.1. Official Area Maps.

9 The official maps of State Responsibility Areas defined in 14 CCR § 1220 are  
10 available for viewing and copying during normal business hours at the  
11 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 1416 Ninth Street,  
12 Sacramento, California, 95814, in the Fire Protection Section. The official  
13 maps are also available on the CAL FIRE Fire Resource and Assessment Program  
14 webpage.

15 ~~When, pursuant to PRC 4125-4128, the Board revises State Responsibility Area~~  
16 ~~boundaries, the Director will forward a legal description of a boundary~~  
17 ~~change(s) to the respective electric utility(s) serving the area(s).~~

18 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
19 Sections 4125-4128, 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code.

20  
21 § 1252.2. Boundary Location -Roads, Etc.

22 Where the boundaries of areas described in 14 CAC 1252 are along roads,  
23 highways, streets, railroads, streams, canals or rivers, the actual boundary  
24 shall be the center-line of the course of such roads, highways, streets,  
25 railroads, streams, canals, and rivers.

1 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
2 Sections 4125-4128, 4292, 4293, Public Resources Code.

3  
4 § 1252.3. Boundary Location -Section Lines, Etc.

5 Where the boundaries of the area described in 14 CAC 1252 are on section,  
6 township or range lines, or on powerline rights-of-way, the poles, towers and  
7 conductors located thereon are within the area described.

8 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

9 Reference: Sections 4125-4128, 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

10  
11 § 1253. Time When PRC 4292-4296 Apply.

12 The minimum firebreak and clearance provisions of PRC 4292-4296 are  
13 applicable during the declared California Department of Forestry and Fire  
14 Protection fire season for a respective county. The Director shall post the  
15 declaration on the official Department web site.

16 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

17 Reference: Sections 4125-4128, 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

18  
19 § 1254. Minimum Clearance Provisions - PRC 4292.

20 The firebreak clearances required by PRC 4292 are applicable within an  
21 imaginary cylindroidal space surrounding each pole or tower on which a  
22 switch, fuse, transformer or lightning arrester is attached and surrounding  
23 each dead end or corner pole unless such pole or tower is exempt from minimum  
24 clearance requirements by provisions of 14 CCR 1255 or PRC 4296. The radius  
25 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

1 distance from the intersection of the imaginary vertical exterior surface of  
2 the cylindroid with the ground to an intersection with a horizontal plane  
3 passing through the highest point at which a conductor is attached to such  
4 pole or tower. (See Figure 2 this Article.) Flammable vegetation and  
5 materials located wholly or partially within the firebreak space shall be  
6 treated as follows:

7 (a) At ground level -remove flammable materials, including but not limited  
8 to, ground litter, duff and dead or desiccated vegetation that will allow  
9 fire to spread, and;

10 (b) From 0-2.4 m (0-8 feet) above ground level -remove flammable trash,  
11 debris or other materials, grass, herbacious and brush vegetation. All limbs  
12 and foliage of living trees shall be removed up to a height of 2.4 m (8  
13 feet).

14 (c) From 2.4 m (8 feet) to horizontal plane of highest point of conductor  
15 attachment -remove dead, diseased or dying limbs and foliage from living  
16 sound trees and any dead, diseased or dying trees in their entirety.

17 Note: Authority cited: Section 4292, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
18 Section 4292, Public Resources Code.

19  
20 § 1255. Exemptions to Minimum Clearance Provisions -PRC 4292.

21 The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4292 are not required around poles  
22 and towers, including line junction, corner and dead end poles and towers:

23 (a) Where all conductors are continuous over or through a pole or tower; or

24 (b) Where all conductors are not continuous over or through a pole or tower,  
25 provided, all conductors and subordinate equipment are of the types listed

1 below and are properly installed and used for the purpose for which they were  
2 designed and manufactured+:

3 (1) compression connectors installed with correct die,

4 (2) automatic dead-ends, connectors,

5 (3) parallel groove connectors with engineered shear bolts,

6 (4) hot line tap or clamp connectors that were designed to absorb any  
7 expansion or contraction by applying spring tension on the main line or  
8 running conductor and tap connector,

9 (5) ~~Fargo CA 300 series Insulation~~ piercing connectors designed and  
10 manufactured for use with tree or coated wire with engineered shear bolts,

11 (6) flat plate connectors installed with not less than two bolts,

12 (7) tapered C-shaped member and wedge connectors with engineered shear bolts  
13 when bolts are required,

14 (8) solid blade single phase bypass switches and solid blade single phase  
15 disconnect switches associated with circuit reclosers, sectionalizers, and  
16 line regulators or, when operated by a qualified electrical worker using a

17 load break tool (Example: S&C Load-Buster) and work procedures that are fire  
18 safe,

19 (9) equipment that is completely sealed and

20 (i) liquid-filled, or

21 (ii) devices that use Vacuum Interrupter (VI), or

22 (iii) air insulation technology with an integrated arrester.

23 (10) current limiting non-expulsion fuses, ~~or~~

24 (11) Engineered mechanical and electrical shunt with engineered shear bolts,

25 (12) Mechanical connector or splice with engineered shear bolts,

1 (13) Pole line accessories and hardware for line sensing and indication that  
2 do not carry current, or

3 (14) Lightning/surge protection devices with approved spark prevention units

4 (c) On the following areas if fire will not propagate thereon:±

5 (1) fields planted to row crops;±

6 (2) plowed or cultivated fields;±

7 (3) producing vineyards that are plowed or cultivated;

8 (4) fields in nonflammable summer fallow;

9 (5) irrigated pasture land;

10 (6) orchards of fruit, nut or citrus trees that are plowed or cultivated;±

11 (7) Christmas tree farms that are plowed or cultivated; and

12 (8) swamp, marsh or bog land; or

13 ~~(d) Where vegetation is maintained less than 30.48 cm (12 inches) in height,~~  
14 ~~is fire resistant, and is planted and maintained for the specific purpose of~~  
15 ~~preventing soil erosion and fire ignition. Where vegetation is planted or~~  
16 ~~maintained for the specific purpose of protecting sensitive habitat or~~

17 preventing soil erosion, it shall be of types that reduce the risk of fire  
18 ignition and rapid fire spread, and shall be maintained or modified at an  
19 appropriate height and eliminate ladder fuels, or

20 (e) Where vegetation is maintained as a residential landscape improvement, is  
21 compatible with surrounding utility infrastructure, and is planted and  
22 maintained in a fire safe manner for the specific non-conflicting purpose  
23 that supports soil stability or aesthetics. P

24 Note: Authority cited: Section 4292, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
25 Section 4292, Public Resources Code.

1 § 1256. Minimum Clearance Provisions -PRC 4293.

2 Minimum clearance required by PRC 4293 shall be maintained with the specified  
3 distances measured at a right angle to the conductor axis at any location  
4 outward throughout an arc of 360 degrees. (See Figure 3 this Article.)

5 Minimum clearance shall include:

6 (1) any position through which the conductor may move, considering, among  
7 other things, the size and material of the conductor and its span length;

8 (2) any position through which the vegetation may sway, considering, among  
9 other things, the climatic conditions, including such things as foreseeable  
10 wind velocities and temperature, and location, height and species of the  
11 vegetation.

12 Note: Authority cited: Section 4293, Public Resources Code. Reference:  
13 Sections 4293 and 4296, Public Resources Code.

14  
15 § 1257. Exempt Minimum Clearance Provisions - PRC 4293.

16 (a) The minimum clearance provisions of PRC 4293 applicable in State  
17 Responsibility Areas but outside of CPUC High Fire Treat Districts Tier 2 and  
18 3 are exempted:

19 (1) Where conductors are:

20 (A) ~~insulated~~ covered tree wire, maintained with the high density, abrasion  
21 resistant, fire resistive outer covering intact, or

22 (B) insulated self-supporting aerial cable systems, maintained with the  
23 insulation and the high density, abrasion resistant, fire resistive outer  
24 covering intact, or

25 (C) ~~supported by sound and living tree trunks from which all dead or decadent~~  
~~branches have been removed.~~



1 (2) Where automatic line splices with approved shunt devices are installed as  
2 described in (11).

3 (2) On areas described in 14 CCR 1255(c).

4 (3) For mature trees ("Exempt Trees") whose trunks and major limbs are  
5 located more than six inches, but less than the distance required for  
6 clearance by PRC 4293, from primary distribution equipment (conductor and  
7 energy carrying hardware, generally less than 35 kilovolts).

8 (A) Exempt Trees must meet all of the following criteria, as confirmed by a  
9 Certified Arborist or a Registered Professional Forester:

10 1. The tree or limb must be six (6) inches or more from the line at all  
11 times.

12 2. The size of the tree or limb at the conductor level must be at least six  
13 (6) inches in diameter.

14 3. The tree must not have "scaffold branches," below eight and one-half feet  
15 from the ground (so the tree can not be easily climbed).

16 (B) All Utility Companies with primary distribution conductors in State  
17 Responsibility Areas (SRA) of California shall:

18 1. Inspect Exempt Trees annually to verify they continue to meet the criteria  
19 in 14 CCR 1257(a)(3).

20 2. Maintain a database of information about Exempt Trees that includes 1)  
21 location, using the format of latitude/longitude in decimal degrees (DDD.DDDD  
22 Datum WGS84); 2) species; and 3) last date of inspection. If any Utility does  
23 not currently maintain such a database it must establish one and provide its  
24 initial report to CAL FIRE by July 1, 2013. Utilities may request, and the  
25 Director may approve, an extension of time in which to achieve compliance  
with this reporting requirement.

1 3. Report the information required pursuant to 14 CCR 1257(a)(B)(2) above, in  
2 an electronically researchable format, annually to CAL FIRE by July 1 of each  
3 year for the previous calendar year.

4 4. When constructing, installing, replacing, or maintaining primary  
5 distribution equipment, prevent the creation of new Exempt Trees, to the  
6 extent feasible.

7 (C) Where there are site specific indications that a conductor has or will  
8 come into contact with an Exempt Tree, or portion thereof as described above,  
9 the condition will be corrected either by altering the tree or by applying an  
10 engineering solution. The actions taken will be documented in that utility's  
11 Exempt Tree database.

12 (b) These exemptions do not apply to "Hazard Trees" as identified and  
13 explained on pages 1-20 through 1-24 in the Department's "Powerline Fire  
14 Prevention Field Guide" dated November 2008 (or latest version) and posted on  
15 the Department's website at:

16 <http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/pub/fireplan/fpupload/fppguidepdf126.pdf>.

17 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4111 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

18 Reference: Sections 4293 and 4296, Public Resources Code.

19  
20 ~~§ 1258. Tree Lines.~~

21 ~~When electric conductors and subordinate elements are fastened to living,~~  
22 ~~sound trees, commonly referred to as tree lines, the requirements of PRC 4292~~  
23 ~~and 4293 shall apply the same as to a pole or tower line.~~

24 ~~Image 1 within § 1258. Tree Lines.~~

25 ~~Image 2 within § 1258. Tree Lines.~~

~~Image 3 within § 1258. Tree Lines.~~

1 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4292 and 4293, Public Resources Code.

2 Reference: Sections 4292, 4293, and 4296, Public Resources Code.

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