

Proceeding No.: I.08-11-006
Exhibit No.: _____
Witness: Ronald Matranga

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
RONALD MATRANGA
SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY
(RICE FIRE)

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
June 5, 2009



1 **DIRECT TESTIMONY OF**
2 **RONALD MATRANGA**
3 **SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY**

4 Q: Please state your name and title.

5 A: Ronald Matranga, Consulting Arborist.

6
7 Q: Can you describe your educational background?

8 A: I attended San Diego State University from 1985 to 1988, where I studied mathematics and
9 education. From 1983 to 1985, I studied general education at Grossmont College. I graduated
10 from high school in 1983. I have participated in continuing education relating to my profession
11 as an arborist since 1991.

12
13 Q: Can you briefly describe your work experience?

14 A: I have more than 25 years experience working with trees in San Diego County. From
15 1983 to present, I have been employed by Atlas Environmental Services, Inc., a company which
16 specializes in tree care. Since 1998, I have been an instructor for a privately offered arborist
17 certification course which helps prepare students for the Certified Arborist exam. Since 1994, I
18 have offered consultation and expert witness services regarding tree issues. Since 1989, I have
19 been the lead field estimator (residential division) of Atlas, diagnosing tree care needs and
20 managing multiple work crews. From 1983-1988, I worked as a field crew member and foreman
21 on various tree care sites.

22
23 Q: What are your professional qualifications?

24 A: I became a Certified Arborist in January 1991 and a Board-Certified Master Arborist
25 (“BCMA”) in February 2007. The BCMA designation is the highest qualification available from
26 the International Society of Arboriculture. I have been a member of the American Society of
27 Consulting Arborists (“ASCA”) since 1994. I graduated from the ASCA Academy in 1999.

28

1 Q: What is the purpose of your testimony in these proceedings?

2 A: I was asked by SDG&E to examine Tree FF1090, including the limb that broke, and to
3 make observations in my capacity as an arborist.

4

5 Q: Did you visit the site of the Rice Fire? When?

6 A: Yes. I visited the site on 11-21-07.

7

8 Q: Did you examine tree FF1090 during that visit? What type of tree is it?

9 A: Yes. It is a *Platanus racemosa* (California Sycamore).

10

11 Q: Had it been trimmed at that time? Did you take pictures?

12 A: It had been reduced in height, with all the upper foliage removed. I took approximately
13 16 photos while on site.

14

15 Q: What observations did you make about FF1090 during your visit?

16 A: I noted the tree genus and species, and diameter at standard height (4.5 feet above grade) of
17 41 inches. I observed the overall setting of the area; specifically that the tree was on the bank of a
18 seasonal creek bed area and that FF1090 was consistent with a naturally occurring, native tree.

19 I observed that based on the size of the finish reduction cut at that time and its proximity to
20 the height of the wires the tree was growing at a total height which would have exceeded that wire
21 height. I observed live foliage on the remaining parts of FF1090 and some heat damaged foliage.
22 I observed the lower trunk of the tree had fire scars from ground level up to approximately 5 feet
23 above ground level. I observed that the remaining structure of the tree appeared to be average for
24 the species.

25

26 Q: Did you examine the limb that allegedly fell onto the power lines? When? Where?

27 A: Yes. I examined a portion of that limb on 11-19-07 at the El Cajon SDG&E facility.

28

1 Q: What observations did you make about the size of the limb?

2 A: I observed that the limb was consistent with *Platanus racemosa*. I observed that it was
3 4.6 feet in length with a “bottom” diameter of 14 inches and a “top” diameter of 13 inches and
4 9.5 inches.

5
6 Q: Did you make observations about decay or rot on the limb?

7 A: I observed there were no visible areas of decay or rot in any of the inner wood and no
8 visible areas of decay or rot on the trunk/ bark.

9
10 Q: Did you make further observations about the limb?

11 A: I observed it was a section of tree that contained a codominant arrangement and included
12 bark. The length of the bark inclusion was 18 inches on one side and 23 inches on the other side.
13 Codominant stems or branches are forked stems or branches of equal or nearly equal size in
14 diameter and relative importance that are lacking a normal branch union. Bark inclusion (aka
15 included bark or embedded bark) is a pattern of development where bark becomes embedded in a
16 crotch between a branch and a trunk or between codominant stems. Included bark is considered a
17 structural defect and causes a weak structure.

18
19 Q: Did you also include review photographs of FF1090? Which ones? When were they
20 taken?

21 A: I have reviewed hundreds of photographs. They are from: Consultant A taken 10-29-07,
22 11-1-7, 11-2-07; Consultant F taken 10-29-07, 11-5-07, 11-8-07, 11-19-07; Cossart taken 10-22-
23 07, 10-23-07, 10-24-07; Lyle taken 10-22-07, 11-19-07, 11-20-07; Orellana taken 10-15-09;
24 Consultant L taken 10-30-07, 11-1-07; C. Thompson taken 11-6-08; M. Daleo taken 11-6-08. My
25 understanding is that all of these photographs were available to CPSD. I have also reviewed my
26 own photographs taken 11-19-07 and 11-21-07. I have reviewed photographs of FF1090 before,
27 during, and after pruning on 10-22-07.

28

1 Q: Did you review other documents?

2 A: Yes, other documents I reviewed included various SDG&E/CPUC correspondence,
3 SDG&E's Vegetation Management Program Tree Pre-inspection Procedures, and "Information for
4 Tree FF1090."

5
6 Q: Did you determine why the limb broke on October 22, 2007?

7 A: I determined that the limb broke due to the failure of a codominant structure with included
8 bark.

9
10 Q: Based on your review of the evidence, would you expect an inspector to be able to
11 determine whether the limb had bark inclusion from the ground? Why?

12 A: In my opinion it would have been difficult or very difficult to observe the bark inclusion
13 from the ground. In my estimation, the section of the tree with the bark inclusion was as much as
14 70-80 feet above ground level. FF1090 was surrounded by numerous mature oak trees with full
15 canopies below the level of the wires. To see through those canopies in the winter, when FF1090
16 was dormant, and obtain a clear look at the portion of the tree that failed would be difficult in my
17 opinion. To see through those canopies in the summer, when FF1090 was in full leaf, and
18 observe bark inclusion would be very difficult in my opinion.

19
20 Q: Is a limb with bark inclusion considered diseased? Is a tree with a bark-included limb
21 considered diseased?

22 A: Included bark is not considered a disease. A tree with a limb or limbs with bark inclusion
23 is not considered diseased.

24
25 Q: What would you look for to determine whether a tree was diseased?

26 A: Evidence of disease presence includes enlarged, stunted, or rotted tissue or tree parts.
27 Excessive sap dripping may indicate infected branches or trunks. Leaves or stems that become
28 spotted, stunted, swollen, discolored, distorted, or wilted may indicate disease. Any tree part

1 which appears to be abnormal for the species might also indicate disease.

2

3 Q: Did you see any evidence that tree FF1090 was diseased? Were any of those signs of
4 disease present here?

5 A: I observed no evidence of disease on either FF1090 when I made my site visit or on the
6 section of tree when I made my physical examination. I have observed no sign of disease on any
7 of the parts of FF1090 I have seen either personally or through photographs.

8

9 Q: Were you able to determine where the subject limb was located on tree FF1090?

10 A: In my opinion, the subject limb was in the upper third of the tree crown, up to 20-30 feet
11 above the wires.

12

13 Q: In what direction was the subject limb growing with regard to the power lines?

14 A: Both of the codominant stems were growing at an undetermined angle away from the
15 wires. This is observed in the cross section of the "top" of the limb that allegedly fell onto the
16 power lines. Reaction wood is clearly visible in the cross section. When a main stem is growing
17 at an angle away from the vertical, it produces reaction wood to counteract the lean. In broad-
18 leafed trees, such as FF1090, reaction wood is termed tension wood and forms on the upper
19 surface of stems and trunks. It exerts an internal contraction that attempts to and tends to pull the
20 trunk toward the vertical angle of growth. This shows itself in the more narrow annual rings on
21 the top of such a stem, and wider annual rings on the bottom.

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CURRICULUM VITAE
Ronald (Ron) L. Matranga

PERSONAL DATA:

Year/Place of Birth:	1966, San Diego, CA	Status:	Married, two children
Work Address:	9032 Olive Drive Spring Valley, CA 91977	Home Address:	9159 Single Oak Drive Lakeside, CA 92040
Work Phone:	(619) 463-1707 ext. 115	Home Phone:	(619) 443-5041
Cell Phone:	(619) 954-6190	E-mail:	ron@atlastree.sdcoxmail.com

QUALIFICATIONS:

2007 – Present	<u>Board-Certified Master Arborist</u> International Society of Arboriculture Champaign, Illinois (Certified Arborist 1991-2007)
1999 – Present	<u>Consulting Arborist</u> Member, American Society of Consulting Arborists Rockville, Maryland A.S.C.A. Academy Graduate, 1999

EDUCATION:

On – Going: Continuing education through attendance of seminars and lectures.

2008 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference	Tucson, AZ
~19 th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar	San Diego, CA
~Selecting, Planting, and Maintaining Trees Following the ANSI, ISA and Accepted Industry Standards	Brea, CA

2007 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference	Nashville, TN
~Risk Assessment for Trees	Anaheim, CA
~18 th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar	San Diego, CA
~I.S.A. Annual Conference	Honolulu, HI
~Spring Pest Control Seminar	San Diego, CA
~Wildfire Education	San Diego, CA

2006 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference	Napa, CA
~17 th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar	San Diego, CA
~Palm Research Symposium	San Diego, CA
~Identifying, Treating, and Managing Hazardous Trees	Brea, CA

2005 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference	Palm Springs, CA
~16 th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar	San Diego, CA
~Western States Palm Seminar	Brea, CA

2004 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference Philadelphia, PA
~15th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA
~Integrated Pest Management Workshop San Diego, CA

2003 Attendance

~A.S.C.A. Annual Conference Lake Tahoe, NV
~14th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA

2002 Attendance

~13th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA

2001 Attendance

~ A.S.C.A. Annual Conference San Diego, CA
~ 12th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA
~ Trees for Urban And Suburban Landscapes U.C. Riverside

2000 Attendance

~ Eucalyptus Pest Management U.C. Riverside
~ Fall Arboriculture Seminar, University of California San Diego, CA
~ WCISA Annual Conference Maui, HI
~ The Ecology of Arboriculture Arcadia, CA
~ 11th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA
~ Trouble Shooting in the Landscape U.C. Riverside

1999 Attendance

~ Pruning Urban Trees for Safety, Health and Aesthetics U.C. Riverside
~ 10th Annual P.T.C.A. Seminar San Diego, CA
~ A.S.C.A. Academy Newport, RI

1998 Attendance

~ Western Tree Management Symposium Arcadia, CA
~ Sustainable Tree Care Conference UCLA
~ Selecting, Planting, and Caring for Palm Trees U.C. Riverside
~ Trees and Development Los Angeles, CA

Note: ~ Continuing education from 1991 to 1998 achieved, details not listed

1985 – 1988 San Diego State University
Mathematics, Education

1983 – 1985 Grossmont College
General Education

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE:

1983 – Present	ATLAS ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC.
1998 – Present	<u>Instructor For Arborist Certification Course</u> Develop and present combination lecture and slide presentation of specific course material to prepare students for Certification exam.
1994 – Present	<u>Consultation, Expert Witness, Professional Evaluation</u> Perform site visits, assessments, and evaluations. Provide professional information to clients and attorneys, produce reports, give depositions and trial testimony.
1989 – Present	<u>Lead Estimator</u> Identify and diagnose tree care needs including: pruning, disease and infestation problems, and hazard reduction analysis. Manage multiple work crews. Provide in-house training for Certified Tree Worker's Program; Western Chapter I.S. A.
1983 – 1988	<u>Field Experience</u> Acted as crew member and foreman providing tree identification, knowledge and application of proper pruning standards, as well as job site evaluation (traffic control, pedestrian and / or property hazards, etc.)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

2002 – Present	Board of Directors, Professional Tree Care Association of San Diego
1999 – Present	American Society of Consulting Arborists
1991 – Present	International Society of Arboriculture
1986 – Present	Professional Tree Care Association of San Diego (Charter Member)

MISCELLANEOUS:

Conduct walking tours of historical tree districts:	Mission Hills	1993, 2000
	Coronado	1995

Manage tree related Question / Answer Forum via Internet Web Site.

Act as qualified judge for Certified Tree Worker examinations.

Act as qualified judge for Certified Landscape Technician examinations.

Act as qualified observer for Certified Arborist examinations

Invited speaker for:

- California Association of Nurserymen - San Diego County Chapter
- San Diego County Master Gardeners Home Gardening Seminar
- Mira Costa Horticulture Club
- Professional Tree Care Association of San Diego
- Ted Stamen Seminars
- California Arborist Association
- Western Chapter, ISA
- John Deere Landscapes Seminars