

1 **9- NARRATIVE**

2  
3 ***First Report of Fire***

4 On October 23, 2007, at 12:55 a.m., the San Bernardino City police/fire dispatch  
5 center received a 9-1-1 call from \_\_\_\_\_, and the caller reported a fire  
6 behind her backyard. The caller's phone number and address belonged to Monica and  
7 Dennis Soares according to the dispatch record. The record included an entry at 12:57  
8 a.m., which read "Edison also calling it in".

9  
10 ***Assignment***

11 On October 23, 2007, at about 1:30 a.m., I was contacted by my CAL FIRE  
12 dispatch center and assigned to investigate the Martin Fire. Dispatch reported its location  
13 on Martin Ranch Road north of Meyers Road. I was committed to a previous fire  
14 assignment three miles west of the Martin Fire at the time I was requested, but I was able  
15 to see the Martin Fire burning from my location on Cajon Boulevard east of Kenwood  
16 Avenue at the time it was first reported. I advised my dispatch center I would respond to  
17 the fire as soon as my previous assignment's initial investigation was completed.

18  
19 ***Initial Observations, W-1 HANSLER estimates acreage and wind speed.***

20 At the time the Martin Fire was initially reported, I was in a position west of the  
21 fire with an unobstructed view to observe its rapid rate of spread. I noted the winds were  
22 still blowing hard, and the smoke from the Martin Fire was burning towards Interstate  
23 215 south of the fire. I monitored W-1 HANSLER'S radio traffic on my vehicle radio,  
24 and he was responding to the fire with his crew on CAL FIRE Engine 3580. In his written  
25 narrative he estimated the fire's size at fifteen to twenty acres, and the Santa Ana wind  
26 was blowing approximately 25 miles per hour with higher gusts when he arrived in the  
27 area at the intersection of Meyers Road and Martin Ranch Road at about 1:26 a.m. The  
28 fire was burning north of that location, and it was threatening structures.

29  
30 I responded to the fire on October 23, 2007, at about at 4:55 a.m. After surveying  
31 the areas around the fire's perimeter, I arrived at Martin Ranch Road and Meyers Road  
32 about 5:40 a.m. I made contact with CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Andrew Bennet, and he  
33 told me there was a power line down on Martin Ranch Road. I continued driving north on  
34 Martin Ranch Road until I located it in front of a domed shape house with a numeric  
35 address of 1701. W-2 WARD was driving a Southern California Edison vehicle ahead of  
36 me and had also just arrived at the scene. At the time of my arrival, I noted there was no  
37 evidence of the fire burning anywhere north or northwest of the conductor lying on the  
38 ground, and the winds were still blowing hard and coming out of the northwest.

39  
40 ***Contact with W-2 WARD (Employee)***

41 At about 5:45 a.m., I made contact with Southern California Edison (SCE)  
42 employee W-2 WARD, and I identified myself as a CAL FIRE investigator. I asked him  
43 if the conductor on the ground was still energized. He said he had to tell me it was, and to  
44 treat it like it was still live. He said he would contact a troubleman and have him meet me  
45 at our location, and the troubleman would be able to tell me if the line was de-energized.

1 I asked WARD not to do any work on the conductor or pole because I was going to  
2 investigate the area. He acknowledged my request and left the scene. I took a GPS  
3 reading next to the power pole with the downed conductor attached to it and noted the  
4 pole number was 2137612E. At about 5:55 a.m., I contacted CAL FIRE dispatcher Beth  
5 Bowersox by telephone and provided her the GPS coordinates. She confirmed the  
6 jurisdictional area was on State Responsibility Area land (SRA), and then W-3  
7 VERKCAIK, Trouble man, arrived at the scene.

8

9 ***Contact with W-3 VERKCAIK***

10 I identified myself to W-3 VERKCAIK as a CAL FIRE investigator. I asked him  
11 if the conductor on the ground was still energized, and he said it was not. He also told me  
12 the conductor was a 12-kV distribution line. I told him I had not seen any other  
13 conductors on the ground in the area while driving to that location, and I asked him if he  
14 was aware of any others on the ground. He said no, but he was going to drive and check  
15 the area north on Martin Ranch Road and would come back and let me know what he  
16 found. I told him I would be conducting an investigation around the immediate area and  
17 asked him not to do any work on the conductor or pole. He left the scene after he used a  
18 tow rope and assisted a CAL FIRE vehicle that was high-centered on the edge of the  
19 driveway leading to 1701 Martin Ranch road just east of pole number 2137612E. When  
20 the vehicle was pulled backwards, it left a narrow black tire streak on the cement  
21 driveway, but no other area was disturbed.

22

23 ***Examination of the Downed Conductor***

24 The length of conductor found on the ground was still attached to pole number  
25 2137612E. The opposite end had detached from above the insulator on the single cross  
26 arm attached to pole number-2 located one span northeast of pole number 2137612E. The  
27 end of the conductor fell to the ground landing approximately 40 to 50 feet away from the  
28 pole. The detached end landed in dirt and was buried just under the surface of scattered  
29 pine needles. There was no evidence of burn marks on the ground at this point, or in the  
30 area between the end of the conductor and the pole it had detached from. The mechanism  
31 causing the conductor to fall could not be determined specifically, but the appearance on  
32 the end of the conductor, having a fresh break with discoloration similar to having been  
33 burned, indicated it may have arced at the moment of breaking. After taking photographs  
34 of the end in its original position, I later moved it for photography with a contrasting  
35 background.

36

37 When the conductor broke free from its insulator on pole number 2, the slack fell  
38 down on top of a tree and into its branches. The tree was located on the southwest edge of  
39 the cement driveway leading into 1701 Martin Ranch Road. The base of the tree was  
40 approximately 15 feet northwest of pole number 2137612E. I estimated the height of the  
41 tree branches were 10 to 15 feet below the level of the conductor that was still suspended  
42 between the utility poles. The vegetation I observed was compliant with the required  
43 clearance of four feet minimal separation between all vegetation and conductors, as  
44 specified in Section 4293.(a) of the Public Resources Code. The branches in the tree did  
45 not show any burn marks at the time of my initial examination. After the conductor fell  
46 into the branches, it landed across the northeast edge of the driveway and onto an area of

1 dried grass bordered by the driveway and Martin Ranch Road. It then lay across the road  
2 and back into dirt where the conductor's broken end was located next to pole number 2.  
3

4         There were three areas of sparse grass burned underneath the conductor that was  
5 lying on the ground. The first area examined was approximately eight feet in length along  
6 the northeast edge of the driveway, and it varied in width from approximately 2 to 18  
7 inches wide. The conductor lay across this burned area perpendicular to the length of the  
8 burn, and the conductor was slightly discolored compared to its gray colored appearance  
9 where it had not been exposed to any heat. There was a small tree stump with an  
10 approximate 2-inch diameter base against the edge of the driveway within the perimeter  
11 of burn area # 1. The stump had the appearance of being recently cut. I located the  
12 corresponding cut end of branch lying on the south side of pole number 2137612E  
13 approximately 15 to 20 feet away. I examined the cut branch, and there was no indication  
14 it had burned. I determined the branch had been cut prior to the fire.  
15

16         A second burned area with a narrow oblong patch of sparse grass, about 18 inches  
17 long, and 10 to 12 inches north of burn area # 1, was also found underneath the downed  
18 conductor. The conductor was severely discolored with a black soot type residue. The  
19 discoloration along the conductor corresponded to the width of burn area underneath it. It  
20 was my conclusion there would not have been enough heat from the available fuel load of  
21 burning grass to cause this discoloration, but an electrical arc would. This observation  
22 supported my examination of the conductor in burn area # 1 when I compared it to the  
23 light grey color section of the conductor in burn area # 1 where it had been exposed to  
24 more heat because more grass had burned around it, but the conductor had little  
25 discoloration.  
26

27         The third area of sparse grass that burned was approximately 15 feet northeast of  
28 burn area # 1 at the edge of the driveway. It was oblong in shape and approximately 20  
29 inches in diameter. The grass that was burned under the downed conductor would have  
30 burned with low heat intensity, because of its short length of less than one to two inches  
31 and minimal density, but several rocks within this burned area had a black colored  
32 appearance indicative of being scorched by high heat. Additionally, the dark sooty type  
33 discoloration on the conductor lying over this burned area indicated it had been exposed  
34 to more heat than the grass alone would have produced while burning. The conductor  
35 also had evidence of pitting on its individual strands making up the circumference of the  
36 conductor.  
37

38         I examined the remaining length of conductor lying on the ground, and there were  
39 no other areas upon it with evidence of having been burned, or having discoloration with  
40 evidence of arcing. Based on the combined observations of the condition of the conductor  
41 over the three separate burned areas, it was my determination the conductor had either  
42 arced simultaneously while on the ground over burn areas # 2 and # 3 before the circuit  
43 breaker detected the fault, and the circuit was de-energized, or it arced once, and after  
44 being de-energized for a pre-set duration of time, the circuit relay automatically closed  
45 again energizing the circuit and caused the second arcing.  
46

1 After taking initial photographs of the downed conductor, poles, and the tree next  
2 to pole number 2137612E to document the scene conditions, I used black and yellow  
3 striped caution flagging to identify and secure the area of the downed conductor, and to  
4 identify my area of initial examination. I moved the end of the de-energized conductor on  
5 the ground, and I placed it on top a piece of plastic material with a green colored  
6 contrasting background to take additional pictures, and then I took additional photographs  
7 of the burned area.

#### 8 9 ***Examination of Pole Number 2137612E***

10 The pole was a non-exempt pole, and it had the required minimum 10-foot fire  
11 break clearance around the outer circumference of the pole in compliance with Section  
12 4290 of the Public Resources Code. The pole hardware consisted of the transformer,  
13 lightning arrestors, arm mounted liquid filled glass fuses, two cross arms, insulators,  
14 ground wire and gye wires, and miscellaneous connectors.

15  
16 The upper cross arm was oriented northeast to southwest. Its conductors were  
17 received at each end of the upper cross arm coming from pole number 4555602E located  
18 approximately 260 feet, and one span away, towards the southeast. The upper cross arm  
19 conductors changed their direction 90 degrees towards the northeast after transitioning to  
20 the lower cross arm. Each conductor, in its transition from the upper cross arm to the  
21 lower cross arm, had a connector attached to it allowing for a section on each conductor  
22 to spit and connect to their respective side of the transformer with a liquid filled glass  
23 fuse in between the split and transformer. The liquid filled glass fuse on the side of the  
24 downed conductor had glass missing from around its length indicating it may have  
25 tripped. The liquid filled glass fuse on the opposite side was still intact with no indication  
26 it had tripped.

#### 27 28 ***Scene Examination beyond Pole Number 2137612E***

29 On October 23, 2007, at about 8:10 a.m., I began examining the surrounding fire  
30 area and noted there were numerous burned spots in a natural drainage south of pole  
31 number 2137612E. The drainage was approximately 45 feet wide until it made a drop-off  
32 approximately 170 feet southwest of the pole. The top of the drop-off had been lined with  
33 cinder blocks to prevent erosion in the event of heavy water run-off. From the end of the  
34 drop-off, the drainage continued another 150 feet south to Martin Ranch Road and the S-  
35 curve behind (W-7) Monica Soares' residence. The topography created a channel to funnel  
36 the wind and any burning embers being fanned by the strong Santa Ana winds coming  
37 from the north and northwest.

#### 38 39 ***Spot Fires***

40 The individual burned spots along the drainage between pole number 2137612E  
41 and the drainage drop-off became more numerous towards the southwest with the first  
42 burned area approximately 40 feet south of the pole. The shapes and sizes of the burned  
43 areas became more defined in their progression towards the southwest. The general  
44 appearance of the individual burn areas showed their base edges were narrower on the  
45 windward edge with a wider fanning out at the leeward edge. The individual burned areas  
46 ranged in a variety of sizes from approximately 12 inches and larger in diameter, with up

1 to 36 inch bases. Several burned areas were elongated and approximately 15 to 20 feet in  
2 length with their longer edges oriented northeast to southwest. I determined these burned  
3 areas were the result of blowing embers landing in receptive beds of dried grass allowing  
4 spot fires to advance ahead of the burned areas where the conductor had arced on the  
5 ground.

6  
7 I followed the progression of spot fires burning in a southwesterly direction from  
8 pole number 2137612E. I examined the surrounding burn indicators and determined that  
9 as the fire burned through the flat area of the drainage, the fire also back-burned up the  
10 southeast aspect of the drainage onto the flat ground plateau surrounding the dome house,  
11 and then burned over the southern edge of the plateau southwest of the dome house.  
12 Simultaneously, the fire advanced beyond the drainage drop-off and began its back-  
13 burning progression towards the northeast and along Martin Ranch Road. Most of the  
14 natural drainage was sheltered from cross winds coming from the west by the height of  
15 the sloping hillside on the west side of the drainage until the drainage reached Martin  
16 Ranch Road at the S-curve behind (W-7) Monica Soares' backyard. At that point, and  
17 towards the west, the plateau's elevation which was providing a shelter from cross winds  
18 on the west side of the drainage had a steep drop-off on the south facing hillside. This  
19 topographical transition significantly contributed to the southeasterly spread of the fire at  
20 that point where the natural drainage met Martin Ranch Road. As a result, the intensity  
21 and rate of fire spread increased with advancing spot fires, and the fire burned up the  
22 southern aspect (south facing slope) on the opposite side of Martin Ranch Road behind  
23 Monica Soares backyard. The eucalyptus trees, also lining the road in this area, showed  
24 intense burning occurred all the way down to ground level through the vegetation.

25  
26 While making my initial examination I did not find any evidence of other causes  
27 for the fire. The fire had burned on the southwest, south and southeast side of the dome  
28 house at 1701 Martin Ranch Road. The house was not occupied at the time of my arrival,  
29 and a search of its perimeter eliminated debris burning, cooking fire, or any other sign of  
30 an open fire as a possible cause. There were three vehicles located on the northeast side  
31 of the dome house, and they did not appear to be in operable condition. The area around  
32 the vehicles was examined and no burn areas were found. There was no evidence to  
33 indicate motorized equipment had been used in the fire's area of origin, and the closest  
34 railroad was approximately 1.3 miles away towards the southwest. There was no  
35 evidence of discarded smoking materials, or fireworks in the burned areas under the  
36 downed conductor, or in those burned areas identified as spot fires.

37  
38 On October 23, 2007, at about 10:30 a.m., I completed my initial examination of  
39 the fire scene. I could not locate any SCE representatives on the fire, so I made contact  
40 with CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Mary Stock who was the incident commander. I briefed  
41 her on my preliminary findings, and I told her she could tell SCE I was finished at the site  
42 so they could make their repairs. She gave me a single page showing a circuit map she  
43 had received from a SCE employee, and I cleared the scene. During my initial  
44 examination, photograph numbers 1-1 through 1-99 were taken.

**1    *Secondary Scene Examination October 24, 2007***

2           On October 24, 2007, at about 3:00 p.m., I returned to the scene with W-4  
3    DEROSIER (Fire Investigator) to place colored flags next to different burn indicators and  
4    take additional photographs. I noted the blown liquid filled glass fuse on pole number  
5    2137612E had been replaced with a non-expulsion type fuse, and the length of conductor  
6    that had fallen to the ground was replaced with a new section. The liquid filled glass fuse  
7    located on the opposite side where the conductor had remained intact was not replaced.  
8    Two new insulators replaced the original insulators on pole number 2, and a new "High  
9    Voltage" sign was attached to the pole cross arm. The black and yellow colored flagging  
10   I had used to secure the area had been removed.

11  
12           While examining the area, I used a ladder from CAL FIRE Engine 3580 to climb  
13    into the tree located adjacent to pole number 2137612E, and I inspected the branches for  
14    burn marks indicating the conductor had arced in the tree, and I found no evidence. I took  
15    photograph numbers 2-1 through 2-27. Lighting conditions were deteriorating for  
16    photography, so I left the flag markers in place to continue photographing the following  
17    day, and I completed my secondary examination at about 6:00 p.m.

**18  
19    *W-5 DAVIGNON Witness Interview***

20           On October 25, 2007, I returned to the scene in front of 1701 Martin Ranch Road  
21    at about 9:00 a.m. I placed several more colored flag markers to document the origin of  
22    the fire. At about 9:30 a.m., and while standing on Martin Ranch Road, I was approached  
23    by W-5 DAVIGNON who had been watching me work from a distance. I identified  
24    myself as a fire investigator, and asked her if she had been home at the time of the fire, if  
25    she had electrical power, and if she had any information about who might live at the  
26    dome house. W-5 DAVIGNON indicated she lived across the street from the dome  
27    house, and she said the power had been off since Sunday (10-21-07) with several periods  
28    of power coming back on and then turning back off. She was home with her family and  
29    they were asleep when the fire had started. She said the electrical power was off when  
30    she had gone to bed for the night, and then around 2:45 a.m., a police officer knocked on  
31    the door waking her. The officer said she had to evacuate the area because of the fire.  
32    That was the first she became aware of the fire. She did not know if anybody had been at  
33    the dome house when the fire started. W-5 DAVIGNON had no additional information,  
34    and she returned to her house.

**35  
36    *Dirt Sample Evidence Collection***

37           On October 25, 2007, at about 10:00 a.m., I used a metal detector to scan the area  
38    around pole number 2137612E, pole number 2, the area around the location where the  
39    conductor's detached end had fallen to the ground, and the area around the three burned  
40    spots found under the downed conductor. While scanning the burned area # 1 and # 3, the  
41    metal detector alerted to the presence of some type of metallic or aluminum material. I  
42    visually checked the area, but could not visually find the source. I photographed the area,  
43    and then collected the dirt from both areas and placed the dirt samples in a 1-quart  
44    evidence can. The dirt collected from burn area # 1 was labeled item # 1 and collected at  
45    10:25 a.m. The second sample was labeled Item # 2 and collected at 10:37 a.m.

1 ***Martin Fire Area of Origin Aerial Photographs***

2 On October 25, 2007, at about 11:15 a.m., The San Bernardino County Sheriff's  
3 Department provided a helicopter, and I took aerial photographs of the Martin Fire's area  
4 of origin and surrounding area. I took photograph numbers 4-1 through 4-31.

5  
6 ***W-6 KELLY Witness Interview***

7 On October 25, 2007, at about 1:30 p.m., I saw W-6 KELLY standing in her  
8 driveway at . I approached her and identified myself as a fire  
9 investigator. I asked her if she was home during the fire, and if the power to her home  
10 had been on or off. She said it was her recollection that sometime during the day on  
11 Sunday, October 21, 2007, the electrical power had gone off for several hours, and then it  
12 came back on around 6:00 p.m. that evening. The power went out again at about 9:00 pm,  
13 and then came back on at about 2:00 a.m. Monday morning. At about 11:00 a.m. on  
14 Monday morning the power was off again, and she and her husband left their home to  
15 stay at another location. She was not home when the Martin Fire started, but became  
16 aware there was a fire when her groundskeeper called her to tell her about the fire. She  
17 said the power had been restored to her residence that day (10-25-07) at about 11:00 a.m.  
18 In closing W-6 KELLY referred me to W-7 SOARES, who lived at the next house up the  
19 road saying she had information about the fire. She had no further information, and I  
20 concluded the interview.

21  
22 ***W-7 SOARES Witness Interview***

23 On October 25, 2007, at about 1:45 p.m., I met W-7 SOARES at her  
24 residence. I asked her if she had any information about the fire or about the  
25 condition of the electrical service. She said just before the fire started she had been next  
26 door at her other house at Road. She estimated the time was between  
27 12:30 a.m. and 12:45 a.m., and confirmed the power was off. She said it had been off  
28 most of the day. While she was standing in one of the rooms, the lights turned back on  
29 momentarily for less than one minute, and then turned off again. She decided to return to  
30 her primary residence at at that time. When she and her  
31 husband pulled into their driveway and got out of their vehicle to go into the house there  
32 was no indication of any fire, but the wind was blowing hard. She went into her house  
33 and into her bedroom that has a north facing window. She looked out the window, and  
34 she could see there was now a fire burning behind her house on the hillside in the  
35 direction of the dome house. She estimated its size as approximately 60 feet long, and the  
36 embers were blowing and hitting against the back of her house. Then the fire just kept  
37 spreading, and she called 9-1-1 to report it, and then they had to evacuate the area. She  
38 estimated the time between the power coming on momentarily at her second residence,  
39 and then seeing the fire from her bedroom window was about 15 minutes. She said at the  
40 time they pulled into their driveway they were facing the same hillside and there was no  
41 fire. After W-7 SOARES provided her information she showed me the view from her  
42 bedroom window and pointed to where she first saw the fire burning. The area she  
43 indicated was towards the drainage and surrounding hillside below the drop-off south of  
44 pole number 2137621E. She said the fire had spread very fast, and the wind was blowing  
45 hard. Before evacuating she called a neighbor to make them aware of the fire. W-7  
46 SOARES had nothing further to add, and I concluded my interview.

1

2 ***W-8 EVANS Witness Interview***

3 On October 25, 2007, at about 2:00 p.m., I made contact with W-8 EVANS in  
4 front of her residence at Her residence was across the street east of  
5 W-7 SOARES' residence. EVANS told me that before the fire started the electricity was  
6 off, and that she had been outside next to her house when she saw a small car driving  
7 north up Martin Ranch Road past her house. When it reached the area of the opened red  
8 gate positioned to restrict further access north on Martin Ranch Road, the car stopped,  
9 and then it made a U-turn. The vehicle then left the way it came in. EVANS could not  
10 describe the vehicle in any further detail. She estimated that 20 minutes later she smelled  
11 smoke and went back outside to look around. When she got outside by her pool, she  
12 looked towards the gate area and could see fire was burning. The fire spread very fast,  
13 and she had to evacuate. After the fire when she was allowed access to return home, she  
14 was looking around the area where she saw the car turn around and found a burned one  
15 dollar bill, and she showed it to me. I examined the dollar bill that had burned around all  
16 four sides and then returned it to her. She also showed me where she was standing by her  
17 pool when she saw the fire. I noted her line of site to the fire was through a pathway  
18 opening on the opposite side of the pool with large trees between her and the gate on  
19 Martin Ranch Road. I noted she would not have been able to see the fire location  
20 observed by SOARES who had an unobstructed view. W-8 EVANS had no further  
21 information, and I concluded our interview.

22

23 ***Area of Origin Documentation***

24 On October 25, 2007, at about 2:30 p.m., I began documenting the location of the  
25 burn indicators I had flagged, and then I photographed the burn indicator characteristics. I  
26 re-examined the area around the gate on Martin Ranch Road where W-8 EVANS had  
27 seen the unidentified vehicle turn around, and I did not find any suspicious items of an  
28 incendiary nature. I did note the appearance of the burn indicators included the thorough  
29 and complete burning of ground fuels, burns on the eucalyptus trees from their bases at  
30 ground level upward, and the dark burn marks at ground level on the metal chain linked  
31 fence poles. The burn marks on the larger rocks and fence post indicated the fire was well  
32 established at that location, and it had approached from the northwest where the natural  
33 drainage met Martin Ranch Road. I completed my examination at about 4:30 p.m. after  
34 checking for potential witnesses at the dome house. I took photograph numbers 5-1  
35 through 5-45.

36

37 ***W-9 PIMENTEL Telephone Briefing and Statements***

38 On October 30, 2007, at about 2:24 p.m., I spoke with W-9 PIMENTEL over the  
39 telephone to discuss the Cajon and Martin fires. I told him I had investigated the Martin  
40 fire, and I detailed for him the observations I had made at the fire's area of origin. I told  
41 him about the witness information I had received regarding the power coming on  
42 momentarily for less than one minute sometime between 12:30 a.m. and 12:45 a.m., on  
43 October 23rd. I said I had also talked with SCE employees W-2 Ward and W-3  
44 VERKCAIK when I first arrived at the scene where the conductor was lying on the  
45 ground. I told him I had located three areas of burned spots under the downed conductor,  
46 and I was curious about how the circuit breakers worked. I asked him if the circuit

1 breakers could cycle back on once or twice after they had originally tripped, and I also  
2 told him I had flagged the area burn indicators for visual reference, and the indicators  
3 showed the fire had come from the area of the downed conductor where it arced on the  
4 ground.

5  
6 W-9 PIMENTEL said he had met W-3 VERKCAIK at the Martin Fire site on  
7 Friday (10-26-07), and was told by VERKCAIK I had been at the scene, and I had set up  
8 a perimeter around the downed conductor. VERKCAIK provided additional information  
9 to PIMENTEL, and he gave me that information during our telephone conversation. He  
10 explained to me the workings of a circuit breaker and started by saying he was not an  
11 electrical engineer but had "gleaned" some information over the years.

12  
13 W-9 PIMENTEL explained to me a relay was a mechanism or device used to  
14 control a circuit breaker at a sub-station. If there was any type of short circuit, or what is  
15 referred to as a fault out on the circuit, then the relay at the sub-station would sense there  
16 was a problem, and the relay would open, preventing the power from the sub-station to  
17 continue through the circuit. He said, as an example, if conductors came together in the  
18 wind, or something took the conductor to the ground, or for instance a tall ladder or crane  
19 came in contact with the conductor, then the circuit breaker would detect there was  
20 something different on the circuit. Depending on the circuit breaker settings, if the fault  
21 exceeds a specific period of time, or the amount of amps exceeds a certain limit, the  
22 circuit breaker would "open" and power would stop flowing from the sub-station on that  
23 particular circuit. He said that was what a relay was. He also answered my question  
24 regarding if the circuit breaker could cycle back on once or twice after it had originally  
25 tripped. He explained, as an example, the event of a tree branch blowing into a conductor  
26 causing it to go phase to phase. The circuit breaker would sense the fault and open;  
27 stopping the flow of electricity. Depending on the circuit breaker setting it might stay  
28 open one-half minute, one-minute, or two minutes and then would automatically will re-  
29 close again re-energizing the circuit. If the tree limb cleared itself, or what ever was  
30 causing the problem cleared itself, the circuit would remain energized. If there was still a  
31 fault the relay would open again de-energizing the circuit. PIMENTEL asked by way of  
32 his explanation if I had ever experienced when the power goes off briefly and then comes  
33 back on. He explained that was called the "circuit test", and it just tests to make sure the  
34 circuit is good. If the circuit is bad, and the fault comes back, the relay will detect there is  
35 a problem, and the circuit breaker will open up again. PIMENTEL said W-3 VERCAIK  
36 mentioned to him that out on the circuit they also had what is called a R.A.R, which was  
37 like a circuit breaker, but it's not at the sub-station, rather it is out on the circuit. SCE had  
38 wind related damage on the circuit earlier the day before the fire, and the R.A.R. had  
39 been opened up, so power had been shut off for a while. PIMENTEL said after the crew  
40 had cleared the area and made the repairs, "they re-energized the circuit at about 12:40 or  
41 so in the morning." He said they had patrolled the area earlier at 1701 Martin Ranch  
42 Road, and it was dark, and there was no problem at the pole. He guessed that while the  
43 crew was out making repairs at different locations on the circuit before energizing it, the  
44 conductor had come down in the wind, and nobody knew about it. So when the circuit  
45 was energized with the conductor on the ground, it created a short circuit or fault. He said  
46 the circuit was energized briefly, and the relay detected a problem and opened the circuit

1 back up, shutting off the power again. PIMENTEL ended by saying "so, that is what I  
2 have so far, so that's probably what the ignition of that particular fire was. We had a  
3 conductor down, but we didn't know and when we energized that section, with the  
4 conductor on the ground, that's not a good thing to happen, and the winds were blowing  
5 like mad."

6  
7 I thanked W-9 PIMENTEL for his information, and we concluded our phone call  
8 at about 2:52 p.m.

9  
10 ***W-10 KELLEY Witness Interview***

11 On February 25, 2008, at about 3:35 p.m., I made contact with W-10 KELLEY at  
12 the dome house located at I identified myself as the fire  
13 investigator for the Martin Fire, and I asked her if she had been home at the time of the  
14 fire, and if the electricity had been on. She provided the following information.

15  
16 W-10 KELLEY said she was out of the area when the fire had started. Her  
17 daughter had also left before the fire, because she worked nights. When her daughter tried  
18 to return home the next morning, she could not get back due to the fire and the area being  
19 closed off, but she was able to get back several days later. Sometime after the fire, and  
20 while KELLEY was home at the dome house preparing for her son's October 27<sup>th</sup>  
21 wedding, a person came to the house and identified himself as a Southern California  
22 Edison investigator. She could not remember the individual's name, but the reason he  
23 came to the house was to ask if she would mind the power being turned off, because SCE  
24 had to perform work on the utility in front of her house. She said it was all right, and the  
25 work was done the following day. In the course of her conversation with the SCE  
26 investigator, he told her the fire was caused by the power lines when they fell to the  
27 ground, and he pointed out to her the general area where the fire started. She pointed out  
28 the same area to me when I interviewed her. She could not remember the exact day the  
29 SCE investigator had come to the house, but she said it was within a week of the fire. She  
30 said he also had mentioned something about a transformer, but she could not remember  
31 the details.

32  
33 I asked KELLEY about the stump located on the edge of the driveway on the  
34 opposite side of the utility pole, and if she recalled if it had been cut before the fire, or if  
35 she could recall it being in place at the time of the fire. She said she regularly cut the  
36 branches that would grow out of the stump, so the base of the tree would not get larger  
37 and lift up the cement driveway. She had cut and discarded the branches on the opposite  
38 side of the driveway just south of pole number 2137612E before the fire had occurred.  
39 We were standing in the area of the stump when she told me this, and she pointed out the  
40 cut branch I had examined the day of the fire. It was still lying in its original location.

41  
42 W-9 KELLEY had no further information, and I concluded my interview at about  
43 3:55 p.m.

1  
2  
3 ***OPINION and CONCLUSION***

4 Based on my training and experience, examination of the fire scene, witness  
5 statements, and the elimination of other causes, I concluded the Martin Fire was started  
6 when a Southern California Edison conductor fell to the ground causing it to arc. This  
7 resulted in the ignition of the dried grass and other light vegetative fuel under and  
8 adjacent to the conductor. After ignition, pieces of burning material were carried ahead  
9 of the fire's points of origin, and new spot fires developed. Once established, the spot  
10 fires spread being pushed by strong winds, and the fire rapidly grew in size. These  
11 specific points were considered in reaching this conclusion:

- 12  
13 1. A conductor used to distribute electrical power was found lying on the ground in  
14 front of 1701 Martin Ranch Road.
- 15  
16 2. Three separate burned areas were found underneath the downed conductor.
- 17  
18 3. The burn marks located on the downed conductor were found above burn area #2  
19 and #3.
- 20  
21 4. The dark discoloration of burn on the conductor was created by more heat than  
22 the sparse grass would have created.
- 23  
24 5. The heat and low flame that would have been produced by the low density fuel  
25 loading under the conductor would not have created the extensive burn  
26 discoloration on the conductor, but heat from an electrical arc would have.
- 27  
28 6. The individual wire strands of the conductor appeared pitted next to the severely  
29 burned rocks in burn area # 3.
- 30  
31 7. W-7 SOARES witnessed the power coming back on momentarily sometime  
32 between 12:30 a.m., and 12:45 a.m., before shutting back off. She estimated the  
33 fire started 15 minutes later, and her 9-1-1 call reporting the fire was at 12:55 a.m.
- 34  
35 8. W-9 PIMENTEL said during a telephone conversation the R.A.R. circuit breaker  
36 tripped at about 12:40 a.m., 15 minutes before W-7 SOARES reported the fire.
- 37  
38 9. The Devore Remote Automated Weather station, located 1.65 miles west of the  
39 Martin Fire origin, showed 19 to 36 mile per hour winds were coming out of the  
40 north northwest forty-five minutes prior to the first report of the fire. Fifteen  
41 minutes after the first report of the fire the winds were coming out of the  
42 northwest at 24 to 42 miles per hour. The burn indicators next to the downed  
43 conductor and in the drainage showed spot fire spread from the north to the south.  
44 The spot fires were located downwind on the south side of the burned areas under  
45 the conductor lying on the ground, and there was no evidence of any fire having  
46 burned on the north side of the area of origin.

- 1  
2 10. The burn indicators were flagged, documented, and photographed. In total the  
3 burn indicators pointed to the area of the downed conductor as the area of fire  
4 origin.  
5  
6 11. Other causes for the fire, including smoking material, incendiary, equipment use,  
7 railroad equipment, cooking fire, warming fire, debris burning, and lightning were  
8 eliminated.  
9  
10 12. Approximately one week after the fire had occurred, a person who identified  
11 himself as a Southern California Edison investigator informed W-10 KELLEY the  
12 fire was caused by a downed power line and showed her the area where the fire had  
13 started. On February 25, 2008, she showed me the same area, and it was the area I  
14 had identified as the origin.  
15  
16 13. The area around the location where the unidentified vehicle was seen by W-8  
17 EVANS before the fire started was examined for any indication of a human  
18 caused fire and none was found. The nature of her suspicion regarding this vehicle  
19 was rooted in her seeing fire burning approximately twenty minutes later in the  
20 same area she saw the vehicle turn around. Her view of the fire's area of origin  
21 was obstructed by topographical features, but the probability of her seeing one of  
22 many advancing spot fires ahead of the main fire being observed by W-7  
23 SOARES from her vantage point is high. I do not consider the presence of an  
24 unfamiliar vehicle driving on Martin Ranch Road, used almost exclusively by the  
25 residents suspicious when taking into account the vehicle may have been an SCE  
26 vehicle checking the condition of the power lines prior to energizing the circuit, or  
27 when taking into account Interstate- 15 had been closed in excess of 12 hours  
28 directly affecting traffic on Interstate- 215 less than one mile away. Numerous  
29 vehicles were attempting to bypass the closures by using adjacent surface streets.  
30 Under these conditions a driver unfamiliar with the rural area and a single lane  
31 road taking them further away from the populated area might find the gate a  
32 natural location to decide to turn around and try another route to bypass the road  
33 closures.  
34

35 The most probable scenario leading to the conductor breaking and falling to the  
36 ground was its exposure to high winds over the course of three days starting on October  
37 21, 2007. The conductor broke at that point where it had been attached to the insulator.  
38 The individual wire strands comprising the whole of the broken end were shiny in  
39 appearance with defined beveled shaped ends similar to the end of a cylindrical wire bent  
40 back and forth until weakened to its breaking point.  
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***Case Disposition***

The case remains open and additional information and material items will be requested from Southern California Edison. Physical evidence in their possession including the conductor, blown fuse, and insulators, and any additional physical evidence collected will be examined by technical experts for opinions and conclusions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rodney J. Delgado", is written over a horizontal line.

RODNEY J DELGADO ID # 1159  
Fire Investigator / Sworn Peace Officer

Date: April 8, 2008