Decision No. 81355

# ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of SIERRA PACIFIC POWER COMPANY for authority to revise its electric service tariff to offset the increased cost of Purchased Electric Power used for resale to consumers.

Application No. 53813 (Filed January 31, 1973)

In the Matter of the Application of SIERRA PACIFIC POWER COMPANY for authority to increase its rates for electric service in California by initiating a fuel Adjustment Rider in its electric tariff.

Application No. 53814 (Filed January 31, 1973)

## OPINION

The two above-entitled applications are consolidated for the purpose of this decision because of the interrelated effect of the applicant's requests.

### Applicant's Requests

Sierra Pacific Power Company (applicant) is engaged in the business of wholesale power purchasing, manufacturing, transmitting and selling electric energy to customers in California and Nevada and is also engaged in public utility gas and water operations in Nevada.

By Application No. 53813, applicant requests authority to increase its rates for electric service in California to offset anincrease of 22% in its cost of purchased wholesale power.

By Application No. 53814, applicant requests authority to adopt and implement a fuel adjustment rider in its electric tariff in California to offset increases in the price of fossil fuels, namely natural gas and fuel oil.

## General Information

Applicant was incorporated under the laws of the State of Nevada on January 15, 1965, as Sierra Nevada Power Company. Its name was changed on March 31, 1965 to Sierra Pacific Power Company. Through A-53813, A-53814 af \*

a merger on or about that date, it became the successor in interest to Sierra Pacific Power Company, a Maine corporation, which was incorporated on March 13, 1912, as the Truckee River General Electric Company. Such merger was authorized by this Commission's Decision No. 68549 of February 9, 1965, in Application No. 47272.

Applicant provides electric service to 23,348 California customers in the counties of Alpine, El Dorado, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas and Sierra, and in the municipal corporations of South Lake Tahoe, Portola and Loyalton. It purchases approximately 25% of its power supply from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), and relies on natural gas purchased from the Southwest Gas Corporation (SGC) for 99% of its fossil fuel requirement for electric generation.

Applicant requested a general rate increase in November, 1971 (amended May, 1972), in order to offset increasing operating costs and to realize a higher rate of return. The Commission in its Decision No. 80865 (dated December 19, 1972) granted the applicant an increase in rates and stated that a rate of return of 8.00% on the adopted rate base for the test year 1972 was reasonable. The applicant also attempted to get authorization for a fuel adjustment clause, but the decision stated that the applicant did not make a convincing showing that a fuel adjustment clause was necessary. The decision provided that should an additional showing by the company justify the necessity for such a provision, the matter could then be considered in a supplemental ex parte order utilizing the staff fuel base cost estimate (5.26 cents per kwh) which was adopted in the decision. The rates authorized in the decision were filed and became effective on January 13, 1973.

## Increase in Purchased Power Costs

In Decision No. 80865, the adopted purchased power expenses were based on estimated 1972 test year power consumption at November, 1971 purchased power rates. On April 28, 1973, the applicant's purchased power expenses will increase because its wholesale supplier, PG&E, has filed with the Federal Power Commission (FPC), Docket No. E-7777, 1/Decision No. 81315, dated May 1, 1973, granted applicant a rehearing regarding level of rate of return and federal income taxes.

a proposed increase in Schedule No. R-1. The increase is a uniform increase of 22% in both the demand and energy charges and amounts to \$130,500 for the test year of 1972.

## Increase in Fuel Cost

In Decision No. 80865, Application No. 53030, the adopted gas expense for test year 1972 was 4.88 cents per therm and was based on April 17, 1972 gas rates. The applicant shows in Exhibit No. B that within an 18-month period prior to the proceeding, five gas price changes had occurred. After the hearings, two additional price adjustments have occurred, and after April, 1973, another gas price increase of 0.3 cents per therm is anticipated. Because of these increases, the resulting average cost of gas for the test year 1972 will have increased to 5.22 cents per therm, an increase of 7.0%. In addition, SGC has pending with the Public Service Commission of the State of Nevada a gas rate increase of 0.401 cents per therm which, if granted, will result in an additional 8.2% increase in gas expense above that considered in Application No. 53030. Natural gas and oil prices are expected to fluctuate frequently in the coming years because of national and international problems which are besetting the fossil fuel industry.

## Revenue Increase Proposals

In order to offset the additional costs, the applicant proposes to (1) increase the electric rates by a uniform cents per kwhr amount for its California customers as shown in the applicant's Exhibit A to offset the purchased power increase, and (2) to implement a fuel adjustment clause to its California tariff to reflect changes in natural gas and fuel oil expense either above or below the 5.26 cents per kwh base cost expense reflected in Decision No. 80865.

Applicant states that unless provisions are made to offset the increase in purchased power expense, the rate of return will drop from 8.00% to 7.734% (Exhibit B, Application No. 53813), and that without a provision to offset the fuel cost increase, the rate of return will drop from 8.00% to 7.65% (Exhibit A, Application No. 53814).

The Commission staff has reviewed the applicant's operational results of the test year 1972. The following summary combines the effect of the increased fuel and purchased power costs as well as the proposed increases.

## Summary of Earnings and Cost Increases Year 1972 (\$1,000)

Item	:No.	80265	Fuel	Purch Power Cost Inc	: Pro	: Rates	d:Adjusted: :ResultsOf: :Operation
Operating Revenues Increases-Offset Purch -Fuel Adj.Ride	.Pwr.		\$ - -	\$ <u>-</u>	\$6,096.0 -	\$ - 132-2 75-5	
Operating Expenses				* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *			
Operation & Maintenand	ce			,			
Purchased Power		593.1	·	130.5	723.6	- N	723.6
Purchased Gas	ı,	126.8	78.4	_,	1,205.2	_	1,205.2
Other		180.4			1,180.4	.6	1,181.0
Total Oper. & Main	t <del>.</del> 2,	900.3	78.4	130.5	3,109.2	.6	3,109.8
Deprec. & Amort.		695.5	-		695-5		695.5
Taxes (Other Than Inc	ome)	419.4	· _	-	419.4		419.4
Income Taxes		223.7		(62.7)	) 123.4	99.4	222.8
Total Oper. Exp.	4,	238.9	40.8	67.8	4,347-5	100.0	4,447-5
Operating Income	ı,	.857.1	( <u>40.8</u>	) ( <u>67.8</u>	) 1,748.5	107.7	1,856.2
Depreciated Rate Base	23,	202.3			23,202.3	-	23,202.3
Rate of Return		8.00	% -	-	7 - 54	% <u>-</u>	8.00%
		(Inve	rse It	em)			

If both requests are denied, the rate of return will drop to 7.54% and, if both requests are granted, the rate of return will be 8.00%, which is the rate of return authorized by Decision No. 80865.

Applicant proposes that if a refund is received resulting from Docket No. E-7777 the applicant will refund to its customers, in proportion to their energy use, all funds received from PG&E. The

refund plan for any fuel refunds shall be filed with the California Public Utilities Commission when such portion of the refunds allocatable to California customers are accumulated to a total of \$10,000 or more.

## Justification of Need for Fuel Cost Adjustment Factor

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In Exhibit B, Application No. 53814, the applicant has demonstrated the frequency of fuel cost fluctuation and also the pending fuel cost increases that are significant. The rapid increase in the price of fuel, unless offset by rate increases to maintain the authorized rate of return will cause the applicant to request frequent offset rate increases. The applicant has made a strong showing to justify a fuel adjustment clause for the increasing fuel prices.

### Fuel Cost Adjustment Clause

In Application No. 53814 the applicant proposes a fuel adjustment clause that is, except for a few wording changes, identical to the fuel adjustment clause the staff recommended in Application No. 53030. The wording changes that have been made are consistent with the provisions authorized in the fuel adjustment clauses for PG&E and Southern California Edison Company.

In addition, a statement in the preliminary statement should be made as to the effective adjustment per kilowatt hour and the date when it will become effective.

The staff recommended in Application No. 53030 that the utility be ordered to file a results of operation report on the previous year's operations by March 31 of each year, including a showing on the reasonableness of the prices it pays for fossil fuels and an analysis of the purchase power costs. This required showing of justification and reasonableness of fuel prices is a reasonable requirement.

## Basis for Ex Parte Action Request

Applicant is requesting ex parte treatment of Application No. 53814, (Fuel Adjustment Clause) as its showing is premised upon this Commission's findings in Decision No. 80865 dated December 19,

1972. As for the purchased power offset rate increase Application No. 53813, applicant is requesting ex parte treatment since it is an offset proceeding and all the required information and exhibits needed for showing are enclosed in the application. Notices of the applications were served in accordance with Rule 24 and no responses were received. Findings and Conclusions

- 1. In Decision No. 80865, dated December 19, 1972, the Commission found reasonable a rate of return of 8.00% for Sierra Pacific and authorized Sierra Pacific to increase its rates for electric service in California by \$397,000 so that Sierra Pacific might realize a rate of return of 8.00% for the test year 1972.
- 2. On April 28, 1973, Sierra Pacific's cost of purchased power will increase per FPC Docket No. E-7777.
- 3. Sierra Pacific's cost of fossil fuel has increased frequently and substantially.
- 4. Sierra Pacific has made a showing as to the necessity for a fuel clause in accordance with Decision No. 80865.
- 5. Sierra Pacific's rate of return will fall below the 8% found fair and reasonable in the Commission's Decision No. 80865, without adequate rate relief.
- 6. Fuel costs are energy related and should be recovered by applying a uniform energy charge to each kilowatt hour sold.
- 7. The increases in rates and charges authorized herein are justified; the rates and charges authorized herein are fair and reasonable; and the present rates and charges without the added charges are unreasonable.
- 8. Sierra Pacific's proposed fuel cost adjustment provision as amended will be adopted.
  - 9. A public hearing is not necessary.
- 10. The fuel adjustment clause will not occasion an abdication of regulatory responsibility, nor will it decrease the incentive of Sierra Pacific Power Company to keep costs down, nor will it be

1. Applicant, Sierra Pacific Power Company, is authorized to file with this Commission on or after the effective date of this order, revised electric tariff schedules, with changes in rates, charges and conditions as set forth in Appendix A attached hereto. Such filing shall comply with General Order No. 96-A. The effective date of the revised schedules shall be on not less than three days' notice to the public and to the Commission.

2. Sierra Pacific Power Company, shall file a Results of Operation Report on the ensuing year's operation by October 31 of each year and a report on the previous year's recorded and adjusted operation by March 31 of each year including in the latter report a showing of the prices it pays for fossil fuels and its fuel requirements.

The effective date of this order is the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this day

of MAY, 1973.

Commissioner J. P. Vukasin. Jr., being necessartly absent. did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.

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## RATES - SIERRA PACIFIC POWER COMPANY, ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

Applicant's electric rates, charges and conditions are changed to the level or extent set forth in this appendix.

#### SCHEDULE D-1

#### RATES

#### (A) DOMESTIC SERVICE

Energy Charge:		and the second of the second o	Per Month
First			
Next Next		r	
Next		x	1.909€
All Excess	kwhr, per kwh	r	1.479¢

(B) COMBINATION DOMESTIC SERVICE: Domestic service in combination with an electric water heater installation in accordance with the Special Conditions below:

Energy Charge:	•	•		Per Month
First Next Next Next All Excess	37 150	kwhr, per kwhr kwhr, per kwhr kwhr, per kwhr	**************************************	\$1.60 4.249£ 3.209£ 1.639£ 1.479£

Per Meter

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

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#### SCHEDULE H-1

#### RATES

· ·						Per Meter
Energy Charge	<u>:</u> :					Per Month
						 77.6
First	300	kwhr,	per	kwhr		 1.669€
All Excess		kwhr,	per	kwhr	**********	 1.239€

#### Minimum Charge:

The minimum energy charge for service hereunder shall be \$1.70 per month provided, however, that no minimum charge hereunder shall apply if customer is purchasing service under one of utility's other rate schedules at this location.

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjusted amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

#### SCHEDULE A-1

#### RATES

Energy Charge:		,	Per Month
First Next Next Next Next Next ALL Excess	37 kwb: 200 kwb: 500 kwb: 750 kwb:	, per kwhr , per kwhr , per kwhr , per kwhr	 3-529¢ 3-319¢ 2-779¢

## Minimum Charge:

The minimum energy charge for service hereunder shall be \$1.66 per month plus \$0.53 per kilowatt of total connected load other than lighting in excess of two kilowatts. For the purposes hereof a horsepower will be considered as equivalent to a kilowatt.

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjusted amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

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#### SCHEDULE A-2

#### RATES

#### Energy Charge:

First	3,000	kwbr	used	per	month	at	1-859	per	kwhr
Next	3,000	kwhr	used	per	month	at	1.649	per	kwhr
Next	3,000	kwhr	used	per	month	at	1.439	per	kwbr
Next	3,000	kwhr	used	per	month	at	1.179¢	per	kwhr
All Excess	-	kwhr	used	per	month	at	0.919	per	kwbr

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour. (The fuel adjustment charge is to be applied after calculation of primary voltage adjustment and power factor adjustment, if any.)

#### SCHEDULE A-3

#### RATES

#### Energy Charge:

First	150	kwhr	used	per	kilowatt	of	billing	demand,	per	kwhr	1.0096	ť
Next					killowatt							
Next					kilowatt							
All Excess		kwhr	nseg	per	kilowatt	of	billing	demand,	per	kwbr	0.699¢	١,

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour. (The fuel adjustment charge is to be applied after calculation of primary voltage adjustment and power factor adjustment, if any.)

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#### SCHEDULE PA

#### RATES

Energy Charge	:		Per Meter Per Month
First Next Next Next Next Next Next Next	37 kw 200 kw 250 kw 4,500 kw 5,000 kw 20,000 kw	whr, per kwhr	3-499¢ 3-289¢ 1-779¢ 1-509¢ 1-349¢
All Excess	Xw	in, per kwbr	 1.239#

#### Minimum Charge:

The minimum energy charge for service hereunder shall be \$1.63 per month.

### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

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SCHEDULE	077
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RATES	•		ll Night Service ump Installation	😅
MIES	•	Rate Per Le	Installed on	rer Monch.
<i>(</i> 1)	Nominal Lamp Rating	(1) Existing Poles	(2) New Wood Poles	(3) New Metal Poles
(A)	Overhead Service			
	7,000 Lumens 20,000 Lumens	\$3.28 5.47	\$4.33 6.57	\$6.48 8.72
(B)	Underground Service			
	7,000 lumens 20,000 lumens		\$ 8.68 10.87	\$10.83 13.02

#### Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the kilowatt-hours per lamp as specified in Special Condition ll below times the number of lamps for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The following paragraph is to be added to the "Special Conditions" section.

11. For the purposes of applying the fuel adjustment, a monthly consumption of 67 kwhr for the 7,000 lumen lamps and 150 kwhr for the 20,000 lumen lamps will be used.

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#### SCHEDULE S-4

#### RATES

(A)	Series Lamps		Rate Per Lamp Per Month Installed on
•	Nominal Lamp Rating		Wood Metal Poles Poles
	(1) 2,500 Lumens (2) 4,000 Lumens (3) 6,000 Lumens		\$2.14 2.92 3.59 \$5.09 5.76
<b>(B)</b>	Multiple Lamps  Nominal Lamp Rating	4 ( )	
	(1) 60 Watts - 600 Lumens (2) 100 Watts - 1,400 Lumens (3) 189 Watts - 2,500 Lumens (4) 230 Watts - 3,200 Lumens (5) 340 Watts - 4,800 Lumens		\$1.22 1.84 2.15 2.82 3.65

## Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the kilowatt-hours per lamp as specified in Special Condition 4 below times the number of lamps for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The following paragraph is to be added to the "Special Conditions" section.

4. For the purpose of applying the fuel adjustment, the following monthly consumptions will be used.

Serie	s_Lamps	Multiple Lamps				
Size	Kwhr/Lamp/Mo.	Size Kwhr/Lamp/Mo-				
2,500 Lumens 4,000 Lumens 6,000 Lumens	49 76 112	60 Watts 21 100 Watts 35 189 Watts 67 230 Watts 81 340 Watts 120				

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#### SCHEDULE IS-5

#### RATTES

## (A) OVERHEAD SERVICE - UTILITY OWNED INSTALLATIONS

	-		Rate Per Lamp Per Month Installed on					
		Nominal Lamp Rating	•	(a)	(d) Doow work	- (c)		
. *	(3) (2) (1)	7,000 Lumens 20,000 Lumens 55,000 Lumens		\$ 3.67 6.14 11.30	\$ 4.68 7.15 12.31	9-32		
(3)	UNDE	RGROUND SERVICE - UTILITY OWNE	D IN	STALLATIONS Rate Pe	er Lamp Per	Month		
	(1) (2) (3) (4)	3,500 Lumens 7,000 Lumens 20,000 Lumens 55,000 Lumens			\$ 7.60 9.02 11.19 19.13			
(c)	S 3	OMER OWNED INSTALLATIONS						
	(1)	Nominal Lamp Rating 20,000 Lumens	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Rate Pe	er Lamp Per	Month		

## Fuel Adjustment Charge:

A fuel adjustment amount will be included in each bill for service as specified in the preliminary statement. The adjustment amount shall be the product of the kilowatt-hours per lamp as specified in Special Condition 5 below times the number of lamps for which the bill is rendered times the adjustment per kilowatt-hour.

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## SCHEDULE LS-5(Continued)

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The following paragraph is to be added to the "Special Conditions" section.

5. For the purpose of applying the fuel adjustment, the following kwhr/lamp/month will be used:

Nominal Lamo Rating	Kwhr/Lamp/Month				
3,500 Lumens	he				
7,000 Lumens	67				
20,000 Lumens	160				
55,000 Lumens	382				

#### PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The following sections are to be added to the preliminary statement.

## 5. Fuel Adjustment Clause:

- a. The monthly charges for service otherwise applicable under each of utility's rate schedules shall be increased or decreased by an adjustment amount in accordance with increases or decreases in the average fuel cost per kilowatt-hour generated in utility's interconnected system above or below five and twenty-six hundredths (5.26) mills (hereinafter referred to as "base cost").
- b. The adjustment per kilowatt-hour shall be computed as follows using the operating results of a twelve-month period preceding the filling date by one calendar month (hereinafter referred to as the "operating period"):
  - (1) The total therms of natural gas consumed during the operating period shall be multiplied by the rate in effect on or before the anticipated effective date.
  - (2) The total therms of each type of oil fuel consumed during the operating period shall be multiplied by the average cost of oil fuel of each type burned during the last month of such operating period. The cost of oil fuel shall include the cost of transportation to utility's generating plants plus any taxes applicable thereto.

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## SCHEDULE LS-5 (Continued)

## SPECIAL CONDITIONS (Continued)

- (3) The total kilowatt-hours generated by the fuel in (a) and (b) above shall be multiplied by the base cost.
- (4) The remainder obtained by subtracting the amount calculated in (c) above from the sum of the amounts calculated in (a) and (b) above shall be divided by the total kilowatt-hours sold during the operating period and the quotient so obtained rounded to the nearest hundredth of a mill (\$0.00001), shall be the adjustment.
- c. Each adjustment shall be filed with the Public Utilities Commission of California for Commission approval on or before the first day of the month preceding the billing period during which such adjustment is intended to become effective. The adjustment per kilowatt-hour shall be used in computing bills for meter readings on the effective date and thereafter until the next such adjustment becomes effective. Such adjustments shall not be revised more often than once every three months.
- d. The adjustment amount to be added or subtracted from each bill shall be the product of the total kilowatt-hours for which the bill is rendered multiplied by the adjustment per kilowatt-hour of 2(d) above, except that for the purposes of applying the fuel adjustment clause, the monthly consumptions per lamp rating will be used as shown in Special Condition 4 of Schedule No. S-4, Special Condition 5 of Schedule No. IS-5, and Special Condition 11 of Schedule No. OL-1.
- e. Any refund from a fuel supplier of monies collected after January 13, 1973, shall be refunded with 7 percent interest to the utility's California customers. A refund plan shall be filed with the California Public Utilities Commission when such portion of the refunds allocatable to California customers has accumulated to a total of \$10,000 or more.

	for service						<u> </u>	
1973, the kilowatt-k	adjustment	per 1	cilowatt	-por	ur is		cents	per

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## SCHEDULE IS-5 (Continued)

## SPECIAL CONDITIONS (Continued)

## 7. Contingent Refunds and Rate Reductions:

Sierra Pacific Power Company shall pass on to its California customers by advice letter procedure any reduced purchased power rates, and refund to its California customers with 7 percent interest any refunds from Pacific Cas and Electric Company pursuant to order of the Federal Power Commission, Docket No. E-7777.