

SCE Undergrounding Forum

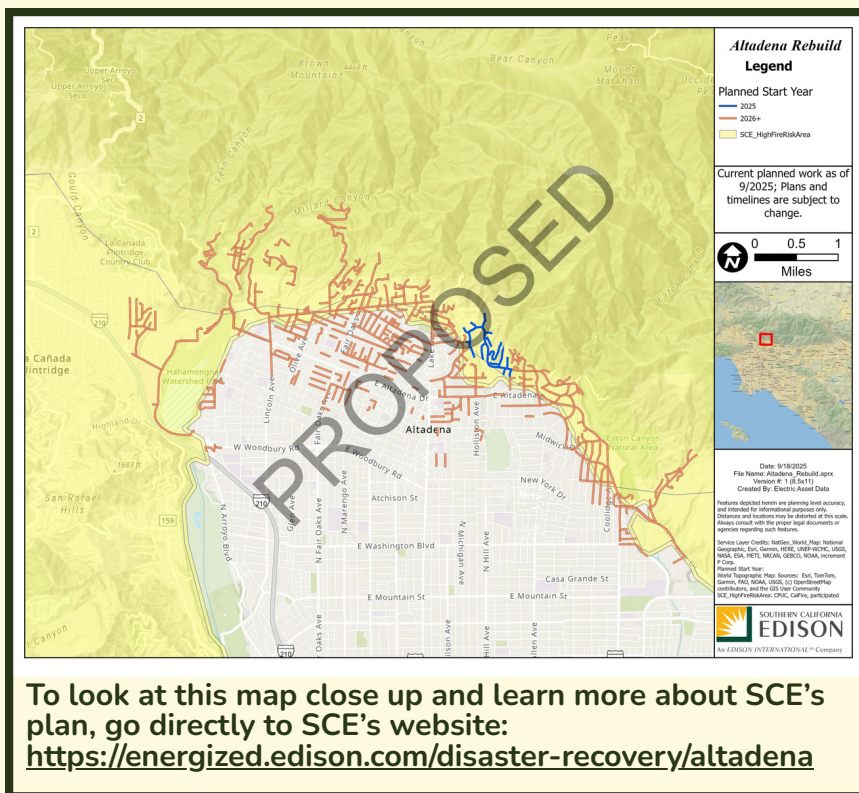
Webinar Summary (October 22, 2025)

Recorded October 22, 2025, this virtual community forum brought together representatives from Southern California Edison, Los Angeles County and the CPUC to discuss plans to underground power lines in neighborhoods affected by the Eaton Fire. The event included an overview of plans directly impacting Altadena and a resident-moderated Q&A featuring questions from the community.

Co-hosted by ACONA and Altgether.

To watch the full webinar recording:

<https://youtu.be/EqpNvCmVOrQ>



A total of 63 miles in Altadena have been approved for electrical undergrounding by Southern California Edison, replacing overhead power lines with underground systems. An additional 19 miles are under review for future phases. Work has already begun in some designated segments. Currently 2.7 miles active (Loma Alta Dr & Sunny Slope); 4.7 more starting within weeks.

As part of this process, residents may be asked to sign a Right of Entry (ROE). This temporary agreement allows SCE to access private property to begin initial work, such as planning or trenching, before a permanent easement is finalized.



Cost to Homeowners

- Estimated \$8,000–\$10,000, often higher for driveways, longer trenches, or panel relocations. (Estimate assumes a 35-ft trench using union labor)
- Work is done by private contractors and cost estimates do not include landscaping or repairs. Standing homes with driveway repairs and panel relocations will cost more than \$10,000.
- LA County is pursuing FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants to offset the costs to homeowners.
 - Decision expected late 2026; work done prior to approval will not qualify.
 - No backup funding if FEMA denies this.
- Insurance may cover some costs, but no double dipping — can't use FEMA funds for the same expenses.

Transparency

- Public dashboard launching 2026 to track trenching, permits, and project timelines.
- Joint trenching ordinance in progress to coordinate SCE, AT&T, and Spectrum and prevent repeated digging.

Risk of Rate Hikes

- SCE may seek cost recovery after 2028, subject to public CPUC review.
- Any potential rate changes will include a public comment process.

Right of Entry Provisions

- ROE = temporary access agreement allowing SCE to begin work before the permanent easement.
- \$500 incentive at signing + additional compensation when the easement agreement is finalized.
- SCE will pay fair market value for any land acquired for permanent easements.
- 100% homeowner participation required for the project to move forward.
- Eminent domain may be used if a fair agreement cannot be reached.
- Power continuity guaranteed — non-signers keep overhead service until conversion.



FAQs

What if I plan to finish my rebuild before undergrounding reaches my area?

You can connect to temporary overhead power until undergrounding is available. Homeowners should discuss panel placement and conduit routing with SCE to prevent future rework. With this current plan, the FEMA Mitigation Grant would not be applicable.

Is the cost for standing homes more?

Likely yes, because the contractor who trenches and lays the conduit will have to go through driveways/hardscapes and landscapes. There may be a need for an electrician to move or replace the electrical panel.

What if I disagree with SCE's easement valuation?

You may request independent appraisal or negotiate directly. If no agreement is reached, SCE can seek eminent domain, where fair compensation is determined through a legal process. County officials have asked SCE to provide clearer explanations of this procedure.

What happens if I refuse to sign the ROE?

If you do not sign, SCE cannot begin undergrounding work on your property. However, your power will not be shut off; you will continue to receive overhead service until your area is converted. SCE can claim eminent domain to access your property.

Who can I contact for updates or help with my specific situation?

SCE's office at the Altadena One-Stop Permit Center has representatives answering questions pertaining to individual properties.

About Altgether

Altgether is a group of organizers and Altadena residents working to help neighbors connect with each other to navigate all steps of the post-wildfire process, keep residents in Altadena, and work together for collective recovery.

We use the Neighborhood Captain model to help connect our neighbors to each other.

Find your neighborhood captain: <https://altgether.org/map.html>



References from the Webinar

WE ASKED:

THEY SAID:

Who pays to connect each property?	SCE (00:10:45–00:10:59) “The homeowner is responsible for trenching from the stub-out to the panel ... about \$8–10k.” Paid to private contractors and excludes landscaping, driveway repairs, panel upgrades or relocation. County consultants expect “additional costs on top”
Why does the number vary?	LA County DPW (00:44:00–00:45:40) Estimate assumes a 35-ft trench using union labor; standing homes, driveways, and panel relocations will cost more than \$10k.
Is funding available to help?	LA County DPW (00:25:40–00:33:10) County and SCE are applying to FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program via Cal OES. Decision expected late 2026; only work done after award qualifies.
Will early rebuilders miss out?	LA County DPW (01:38:41–01:39:23) “Correct ... work before the award is not eligible.” County will ask FEMA if temporary overhead connections could later qualify.
If the grant fails?	LA County DPW (00:33:47–00:34:07) “There is no Plan B.”
Will rates go up?	SCE / CPUC (00:37:35–00:39:21; 01:23:00–01:25:00) Under Rule 16, homeowners pay for private-side work. SCE may later (after 2028) request CPUC cost recovery—any filing would include public review.
Where can residents see full maps and schedules?	SCE & LA County DPW (00:29:18–00:30:06; 01:10:00–01:12:00) Preliminary maps are online; a County Altadena Rebuild Dashboard with trenching and permit timelines launches 2026.
Will utilities coordinate to avoid multiple digs?	LA County DPW (01:18:15–01:19:05) A draft ordinance will require joint trenching between SCE, AT&T, and Spectrum.
What is the Right of Entry (ROE)?	SCE (00:14:06–00:14:23) A temporary access agreement allowing SCE to begin work while the permanent easement is prepared.
What do owners get for signing?	SCE (00:15:21–00:15:31) “\$500 at ROE signing and additional compensation at easement signing.”
Must everyone sign?	SCE (00:15:36–00:15:43) Yes — “100 % participation ... is necessary to proceed.”
What about legal rights or eminent domain?	SCE (00:17:00–00:17:09) ROE “does not waive or release prior claims.” The agreement allows SCE to seek eminent domain only if compensation can’t be agreed upon.
Will power be shut off if I don’t sign?	SCE (01:36:00–01:37:00) “No — existing overhead service will continue until undergrounding reaches that segment.”