

Tracy transformer takes a load off

By Dave Christy

A new 500/230-kV transformer should be in service at Western's Tracy, Calif., substation by mid-2002 to help relieve the strain on an existing transformer.

"The new transformer won't increase the capacity of the transmission system, but it will reduce loads on the existing transformer. It's like adding a freeway off ramp," explained Sierra Nevada Region Transmission System Planner **Morteza Sabet**. The transformer was operated above its rating during periods of high demand this summer—a practice that reduces its life.

Interim measures such as redispatching generation, distributing load through switching or, as a final step, load shedding, will help to minimize overloads until the new transformer is installed.

Staff in Western's Sierra Nevada and Desert Southwest regions and Corporate

Services Office will perform the design work and administer the construction contract for the transformer installation.

The work is being performed under contract to the Transmission Agency of Northern California, made up of Western customers, which will own the transformer as part of the California-Oregon Transmission Project. The project's estimated cost is \$20 million.

Congress appropriated \$2 million this year for Western's share of the cost, which will be repaid by power customers.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will need to relocate some dredge ponds to make room for the new transformer, and preliminary work has started on that part of the project. Work has also begun on environmental documentation and design of the substation layout, bus structures and control panels.

(Note: Christy is a public affairs specialist in SN.) ■