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SpectraSite Communications, LLC

8 **BEFORE THE HEARING BOARD OF THE**

9 **SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

10 SPECTRASITE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC;

CASE NO. 6261-2

11 Petitioner,

12 **(Proposed) FINDINGS AND DECISION**
13 **AND ORDER GRANTING REGULAR**
14 **VARIANCE**

13 vs.

14 SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY
15 MANAGEMENT DISTRICT,

Date: September 11, 2024

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Hearing Board
South Coast Air Quality

16 Respondent.

Management District

21865 Copley Drive

Diamond Bar, CA 91765

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20 This Petition for a Regular Variance was heard on the Hearing Board’s Consent Calendar on
21 September 11, 2024, pursuant to notice and in accordance with the provisions of the California Health
22 and Safety Code section 40826 and South Coast Air Quality Management District (“District”) Rule
23 510. The following members of the Hearing Board were present: Micah Ali, Chair; Robert Pearman,
24 Vice-Chair; Mohan Balagopalan; Jerry P. Abraham, MD; and Cynthia Verdugo-Peralta. SpectraSite
25 Communications, LLC (“Petitioner”), represented by Eoin L. Kreditor, did not appear. South Coast
26 Air Quality Management District (“Respondent”), represented by Mary Reichert, Senior Deputy
27 District Counsel, did not appear.
28

1 The matter was submitted for consideration on the Consent Calendar. The public was given an
2 opportunity to testify. The Declaration of Angela Robertson and the Declaration of Jennifer Mulkern
3 were received as evidence, and the [Proposed] Findings and Decision of the Hearing Board was
4 received. The Parties have stipulated by Stipulation to Place Matter on Consent Calendar and to the
5 issuance of this Order. The Hearing Board finds and decides as follows:

6 **Nature of Business and Location of Facility**

7 Petitioner operates a wireless telecommunications facility at 17047 E. Gale Avenue, Hacienda
8 Heights, CA 91745 located at Facility No. 194462 (the “Facility”). The facility runs on commercial
9 electric power, but the facility utilizes a diesel-fired emergency generator to provide power during
10 times of commercial power loss, maintenance and testing.

11 **Equipment and Permit to Construct/Operate**

12 The equipment subject of this petition consists of an emergency generator internal combustion
13 engine (“ICE”) operated pursuant to Permit to Operate No. G65402. The ICE is used to provide power
14 when there is an interruption of commercial electric power by Southern California Edison (“SCE”).
15 The ICE provides emergency backup power in the event of a power outage, which allows the Facility
16 to continue uninterrupted to provide cellular service to its customers.

17 **SUMMARY**

18 Petitioner is in violation of District Rule 203(b) and Condition No. 4 of its Permit to Operate and
19 will achieve compliance when the renewal period begins on January 1, 2025, and the engine’s annual
20 operation time allocation starts over.

21 **FINDINGS OF FACT**

22 Following are the facts and conclusions supporting the findings set forth in Health and Safety
23 Code Section 42352 necessary to grant the variance. The Executive Officer did not oppose the
24 granting of the regular variance.

25
26 **1. The petitioner for a variance is, or will be, in violation of Section 41701 or of any rule, regulation, or order of the District.**

27 The Petitioner is in violation of District Rule 203(b), which requires compliance with permit
28 conditions, because petitioner has exceeded its annual permitted operating limit of 200 hours

1 (including no more than 50 hours in any one year and no more than 4.2 hours in any one month for
2 maintenance and testing purposes) for its engine as specified in Condition No. 4 of Petitioner’s Permit
3 to Operate No. G65402.

4 **2. Non-compliance with District Rule(s) is due to conditions beyond the reasonable control of**
5 **the petitioner, and requiring compliance would result in either (A) an arbitrary or**
6 **unreasonable taking of property, or (B) the practical closing and elimination of a lawful**
7 **business**

8 **A. Non-compliance with District Rule(s) is due to conditions beyond the reasonable control**
9 **of the petitioner.**

10 The subject non-compliance was beyond the reasonable control of Petitioner because ICE failed
11 to stop due to an engine malfunction despite commercial power being available. There was a
12 malfunction communication issue with voltage reading and a mechanical failure with the automatic
13 transfer switch. This resulted in 182 hours of malfunction runtime between February 14, 2024 and
14 February 23, 2024.

15 **B. Requiring compliance would result in either (A) an arbitrary or unreasonable taking of**
16 **property or (B) the practical closing and elimination of a lawful business.**

17 Denial of the variance would cause significant harm to the Petitioner, as well as the public, and
18 would create an unreasonable safety risk to the public. Petitioner would not be able to provide a
19 service it is contractually required to provide, which will expose it to financial liability and
20 obligations. Further, cellular service to the area in the case of an emergency would be materially and
21 adversely impacted, including the ability to make 911 and other calls vital to public safety.

22 **3. The closing or taking would be without a corresponding benefit in reducing air**
23 **contaminants.**

24 The Board determined that the significant harm to Petitioner and public would outweigh the
25 benefit to air quality if the emissions associated with the variance request were eliminated as a result
26 of denying the variance.

27 **4. The applicant for the variance has given consideration to curtailing operations of the source**
28 **in lieu of obtaining a variance.**

Curtailment or shutdown of the ICE would not bring Petitioner into compliance because
Petitioner has already exceeded the 200-hour operating limit for calendar year 2024. Curtailing further

1 operations is not a feasible option because the resumption of the usage of the ICE is necessary to
2 ensure Petitioner’s customers can provide uninterrupted cellular coverage and 911/emergency
3 response communications.

4
5 **5. During the period the variance is in effect, the applicant will reduce excess emissions to the maximum extent feasible.**

6 During the period of the variance, Petitioner will reduce excess emissions to the maximum extent
7 feasible. All non-emergency usage of the ICE will be limited to required testing and maintenance. In
8 addition, all emergency usage of the ICE will be limited to power loss and rotating outage for the
9 remainder of 2024.

10 **6. During the period the variance is in effect, the applicant will monitor or otherwise quantify emission levels from the source, if requested to do so by the district, and report these emission levels to the district pursuant to a schedule established by the district.**

11
12 Petitioner shall maintain a monthly operating log for the emergency ICE and shall send the
13 records to the South Coast AQMD by email to AQ Inspector Andrea Barlow (abarlow@aqmd.gov) on
14 the first Tuesday of each month beginning October 1, 2024. The operating log shall list all engine
15 operations in the following areas: (a) Date and hours of emergency operation and specify the cause of
16 the emergency; (b) Date and hours of maintenance and testing operations; and (c) Date and hours of
17 any other non-emergency operation.

18 **ORDER**

19 THEREFORE, good cause appearing, the Hearing Board orders as follows:

20 Petitioner is granted a regular variance from Rules 203(b), for an Internal Combustion Engine
21 (“ICE”) from Condition No. 4 of Permit to Operate No. (“PO”) G65402 for the period commencing
22 September 11, 2024, and continuing through December 31, 2024, the final compliance date.

23 The variance granted is subject to the following conditions:

24 1. Petitioner shall provide updates on the repair of the Automatic Transfer Switch (ATS) (i.e.
25 scheduled repair date, parts acquisition, etc.) associated with the ICE, as described in the PO No.
26 G65402, to the South Coast AQMD by email to AQ Inspector Andrea Barlow (abarlow@aqmd.gov)
27 each weekly by Friday at 5pm beginning with Friday, September 20, 2024. Once the repair is
28

1 complete and final notice of the repair has been provided to the South Coast AQMD, no further
2 reporting shall be due under this condition.

3 2. Petitioner shall limit the use of the ICE (PO No. G65402) during the repair of the ATS to no
4 more than what is required to complete the repair.

5 3. Once the repair is complete, Petitioner shall limit the operation of the ICE, as described in PO
6 No. G65402, to emergency usage, and the ICE shall operate no more than 1.0 hour per month total for
7 maintenance and testing time.

8 4. Petitioner shall maintain a monthly operating log for the emergency ICE and shall send the
9 records to the South Coast AQMD by email to AQ Inspector Andrea Barlow (abarlow@aqmd.gov) on
10 the first Tuesday of each month beginning October 1, 2024. The operating log shall list all engine
11 operations in the following areas:

- 12 a. Date and hours of emergency operation, and specify the cause of the emergency;
- 13 b. Date and hours of maintenance and testing operations; and
- 14 c. Date and hours of any other non-emergency operation.

15 5. Petitioner shall pay all applicable fees to the Clerk of the Board, or the variance shall be
16 invalidated pursuant to Rule 303(k), except for excess emissions fees, which shall be paid within
17 fifteen (15) days of notification in writing that the fees are due, unless otherwise ordered by the
18 Hearing Board. Petitioner shall calculate, record, and report all excess emissions during the variance
19 period, and pay appropriate excess emission fees to the Clerk of the Board. Petitioner may exclude
20 any hours the ICEs are operated for Public Safety Power Shutoff (“PSPS”) events as defined by Rule
21 118.1 by following the procedures in Rule 118.1(d), if Petitioner complies with the notification and
22 reporting requirements of Rule 118.1(e) and (f).

23 6. Except as otherwise permitted in variance condition #2 and 3, Petitioner shall cease operation
24 of the ICE (PO No. G65402).

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26 FOR THE BOARD: _____

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28 DATE SIGNED: _____

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