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Man held in power outage at ISO office

- Bee Metro Staff

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A 32-year-old man was arrested Wednesday in connection with an internal power outage at the California Independent System Operator's offices in Folsom late Sunday, according to authorities.

Lonnie Charles Denison faces one charge of destruction of an energy facility, a federal offense, according to FBI spokeswoman Karen Ernst.

Denison provided technical support to ISO -- a quasi-state agency that runs the state's electricity transmission grid -- as an employee of San Diego-based Science Application International Corp., which contracts with ISO, said ISO spokeswoman Stephanie McCorkle.

His security access had been suspended sometime last week at the request of his employer "based on an employee dispute," according to a federal affidavit, but Denison nonetheless gained access to the facility late Sunday night and hit an "emergency power off" button, shutting down some ISO computer systems. He used a hammer to break the glass case enclosing the button, it says.

The outage did not affect the state's power grid, according to ISO.

McCorkle said Denison also has been identified as the person who sent a threatening e-mail to ISO on Monday. The e-mail prompted the evacuation of about 500 employees from about noon until almost 6 p.m. Ernst said Denison has not been charged in connection with that e-mail and that the incident still is under investigation.

During the evacuation, ISO's operations were transferred from Folsom to Southern California. The interruption cost ISO about \$14,000, according to the affidavit.

Denison is being held in the Sacramento County Main Jail and is scheduled to go before a federal judge today.

If convicted of the charge, Denison could face a fine, a term of up to five years in prison or both, the affidavit states.

The case was investigated by the Sacramento Joint Terrorism Task Force -- composed of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies -- and the Folsom Police Department.

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