Schneider Electric Outlines Five Cost Factors for Comparing SF□-Free and Conventional MV Switchgear

Five lifecycle cost categories for comparing SF□-free and conventional MV switchgear; offers must match on technical scope before any premium is assumed.

SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE, September 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The quoted price of SF□-free medium-voltage (MV) switchgear is only one part of its lifecycle cost. Schneider Electric today outlined five cost categories for comparing conventional and SF□-free offers, and set out why equivalent technical scope, included services and local requirements are essential conditions for a meaningful comparison.

Comparable scope comes before cost. Competing offers should first meet the same application requirements, including distribution level, insulation architecture, rated voltage, continuous current, short-time withstand current, functional arrangement, internal-arc classification, loss of service continuity, footprint, and extension requirements.

The commercial scope also needs to be aligned. Sensors, gateways, software, service agreements, spare parts, commissioning, and training may be included in one offer and excluded from another. Identifying these differences prevents equipment architecture, digital functions, and service coverage from being combined into a single unexplained price gap.

1. Purchase price reflects the selected configuration. Product ratings, functional units, order volume, local availability, and production scale can all affect an individual quotation. Because these conditions vary among projects and markets, the appropriate evidence is a set of technically comparable bids rather than a portfolio-wide assumption about the price of SF□-free equipment.
Buyers should request a clear bill of materials and identify which elements are standard, optional, or supplied through a separate service agreement. This establishes whether the quoted difference relates to the insulating medium, equipment functionality, digital options, or another part of the offer.

2. Installation costs depend on equipment and site conditions. Switchgear architecture can affect civil works, panel dimensions, cable and busbar interfaces, on-site gas work, testing, and commissioning.
GM AirSeT, introduced in 2025, uses a factory-filled sealed tank and insulated busbar

connections that eliminate the need for on-site gas filling. This is a configuration-specific example of installation simplification, not a characteristic that applies automatically to every AirSeT product or every SF□-free design. Each bidder should document the site work required for the offered configuration.

3. Operations and maintenance costs include equipment, data, and services. Connected monitoring is not exclusive to SF□-free switchgear. Both conventional and SF□-free equipment can incorporate sensors, communications, and condition-monitoring functions.
A basic switchboard and a connected configuration with remote support do not have the same commercial scope. Buyers should compare monitored parameters, software or service fees, cybersecurity responsibilities, alert validation, spare-parts coverage, and field-response commitments. Schneider Electric's EcoCare services are an optional service layer, so their availability and cost should be evaluated separately from the insulating medium.

4. Regulatory and reporting costs are jurisdiction-specific. In the European Union, Regulation (EU) 2024/573 prohibits putting into operation certain new MV switchgear up to and including 24 kV that uses fluorinated greenhouse gases in its insulating or breaking medium from January 1, 2026. The corresponding date for equipment above 24 kV and up to and including 52 kV is January 1, 2030, subject to the regulation's derogations.

The same regulation assigns SF□ a 100-year global warming potential of 24,300 relative to CO□, meaning that one kilogram of released SF□ is reported as 24,300 kilograms of CO□e. Whether this creates a direct reporting or financial obligation depends on the applicable jurisdiction and reporting framework. Buyers outside the European Union should assess local rules, tender requirements, and corporate reporting policies rather than treating the EU timetable as a local prohibition.

5. End-of-life costs require a local estimate. Decommissioning equipment containing an F-gas may require qualified personnel, gas recovery, documentation, transport, and recycling, reclamation, or destruction under applicable rules. Equipment without fluorinated insulating gas avoids that particular recovery step, while normal isolation, dismantling, material processing, and waste-management costs remain.

Lifecycle estimates should therefore state the assumed equipment life, retirement location, contractor rates, and party responsible for recovery and disposal. The resulting cost difference will depend on the product, jurisdiction, and service arrangement rather than a universal savings percentage.

Adoption records provide context, not comparative cost data. Schneider Electric's 2025 framework agreement with E.ON followed a Westnetz pilot and covers annual supplies of GM AirSeT and RM AirSeT equipment. It demonstrates progression from technical evaluation to framework procurement; it does not disclose comparative prices or realized lifecycle savings.

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