



City of Ellensburg Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan

September 30, 2024

1.0 Executive Summary

When the Washington Legislature passed [House Bill 1032](#) in July 2023 it stated that, *it is in the best interest of the state, our citizens, and our natural resources to identify the sources of wildland fires; identify and implement best practices to reduce the prevalence and intensity of those wildland fires; put those practices in place; and by putting those practices in place, reduce the risk of wildland fires and damage and losses resulting from those fires.*

The Legislature directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in consultation with the Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office of the Department of Commerce, to contract with an independent consultant with experience in developing electric utility wildfire mitigation plans to develop an electric utility wildfire mitigation plan format and a list of elements to be included in electric utility wildfire mitigation plans.

By October 31, 2024, and every three years thereafter, each consumer-owned utility and investor-owned utility must review, if appropriate revise, and adopt its wildfire mitigation plan. When reviewing or revising a wildfire mitigation plan, utilities must use the recommended format and elements contained in the WMP format. The plan must be submitted to the utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee created in RCW 76.04.780 to be posted on their website.

The template and list of elements included were developed in conjunction with the Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee, electric utilities, the state fire marshal, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and the public. The WMP format is intended to function as a guide and provide utilities with suggested elements for their plan which are informed by best practices demonstrated to reduce the prevalence and intensity of wildfires and which reduce the risk of wildfire and the resulting damage and losses.

Each section of the WMP format provides suggested topics, language, and guidance for its completion. It is recognized that each utility faces unique geography, terrain, vegetation, and other characteristics that will present a variety of risk levels and result in unique and tailored approaches to address that risk. To that end, the WMP format has been designed to accommodate a broad range of recommended elements. It is not expected that all utilities will have practices or even a need to complete all sections or elements to the same degree. There are no statutory requirements directing what utilities must include in their plans. It is at the discretion of each utility to determine the elements applicable to its own wildfire mitigation efforts and the level of detail necessary to describe each element.

The WMP format was developed in recognition that some utilities may have wildfire mitigation programs that are more robust than others. It is acceptable to note these limitations when completing the WMP.

Table of Contents

Section	Page
1.0 Executive Summary	2
2.0 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Overview	4
2.1 Purpose of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan	4
2.2 Description of Where WMP Can be Found Online	4
3.0 Utility Overview.....	4
4.0 Objectives of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan	5
4.1 Minimizing likelihood of ignition.....	5
4.2 Resiliency of the electric grid	6
5.0 Roles and Responsibilities	6
5.1 Utility Roles and Responsibilities.....	6
5.2 Coordination with local utility and infrastructure providers.....	6
5.3 Emergency Management / Incident Response Organization	6
6.0 Wildfire Risks and Drivers.....	6
7.0 Wildfire Preventative Strategies	7
7.1 Relay and Recloser Practices	7
8.0 Community Outreach and Public Awareness	7
Appendix A. City of Ellensburg Light Department Service Area.....	8

2.0 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Overview

2.1 Purpose of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan

This Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) describes in detail the range of activities that a Utility or joint Utilities are taking to mitigate the threat of utility involved wildfires, including various programs, policies, and procedures. This plan complies with the requirements of HB1032 for investor and customer owned electric utilities (IOU/COU) to prepare a wildfire mitigation plan by October 31, 2024, and every three years thereafter.

2.2 Description of Where WMP Can be Found Online

The current copy of the City of Ellensburg Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan can be found on the city website at www.ci.ellensburg.wa.us.

3.0 Utility Overview

Mission Statement:

To provide customers affordable, safe, and reliable electric services.

Strategies:

- Continue to provide affordable, safe, and reliable electric services to our customers.
- Provide our employees with the necessary resources to efficiently and effectively carry out their jobs in a safe manner. Continue education and training of employees on an annual basis.
- Continue to improve, expand and loop distribution systems to increase safety, capacity, and reliability.

General Overview

The Public Works and Utilities Department is responsible for the City's Electric Utility. Electric utility staff provides administrative, engineering, operating and maintenance services for utility customers.

Electric Utility

The Electric Utility was formed as a municipal electric utility in 1891 making it the oldest municipal electric utility in Washington State. The Utility serves about 10,000 customers within the city limits delivering approximately 25 aMW's annually over 47 miles of overhead conductor and 83 miles of underground cable. The Utility purchases all of its power supply from the Bonneville Power Administration and owns a small community renewable energy generation facility. The Utility offers energy efficiency programs including rebates to its customers.

Table 1. Context-Setting Information Table

Utility Name	City of Ellensburg Public Works and Utilities – Light Department
Service Territory Size (sq miles)	14.7 Sq/ mi.
Service Territory Make-up	95% Urban 5% Agriculture
Customers Served	10,588
Account Demographic	85% Residential 15% Commercial/Industrial
Utility Equipment Make-up (circuit miles)	Overhead Dist.: 47.0 mi Overhead Trans.: 0.5 mi Underground Dist.: 84.3 mi Underground Trans.: 0.0 mi
Has developed protocols to pre-emptively shut off electricity in response to elevated wildfire risks?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has previously pre-emptively shut off electricity in response to elevated wildfire risk?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

4.0 Objectives of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Wildfires can represent a challenge to electrical utilities as they have the potential to impact many customers, damage infrastructure, and create safety concerns for both utility workers and customers. These risks are a growing concern for many utilities and there are efforts throughout the industry to develop best practices to mitigate and reduce the risk of wildfires. The City of Ellensburg Light Department’s mission is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to our customers. To help achieve this goal, the Light Dept. is committed to an ongoing assessment of our distribution infrastructure, our design and construction standards, as well as our operation and maintenance practices to help mitigate the risk of wildfires.

4.1 Minimizing likelihood of ignition

- Disabling automatic reclosing settings for the summer months on reclosers that serve feeders that have been identified as high risk by staff based on current conditions.
- Complete annual tree trimming to eliminate hazardous trees and branches that represent a risk to operations and maintenance and may be a source of ignition.
- Identify aging, damaged or obsolete sections of the distribution system and complete maintenance projects to correct any potential sources of ignition.

4.2 Resiliency of the electric grid

The City of Ellensburg has a very robust electrical distribution system, where all the electrical feeders and branch distribution is looped and intertied with other feeders, branch distribution and substations. All feeders and substations have sufficient spare capacity to back feed all feeders through out the year.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Utility Roles and Responsibilities

The City of Ellensburg utilizes a seven member Council-Manager form of government with a City Manager hired by the City Council. The City Council elects a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem from the Council to serve two-year terms. The City Manager is responsible for overseeing the operations of the city and its utilities. The Public Works and Utilities director reports directly to the City Manager and, in addition to other duties, is responsible for the operation of the city's five utilities including the Light Department. The senior electrical engineer reports to the director via the city engineer. The senior electrical engineer is responsible for determining the operational parameters of the electrical utility during normal operations and high fire risk conditions. The light operations supervisor is responsible for dispatching and coordinating the efforts of the line crew during normal operations and high fire risk conditions and reports to the director via the assistant utility director.

5.2 Coordination with local utility and infrastructure providers

The City of Ellensburg operates multiple utilities including water, sewer, natural gas, storm water and electrical. A significant advantage of the City of Ellensburg operating a municipal electrical utility is the close coordination with the other municipal utilities, first responders and law enforcement. The utilities operate under a common management structure with established lines of communication between all utilities, first responders and law enforcement.

5.3 Emergency Management / Incident Response Organization

Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue (KVFR) provides fire and EMS service to Kittitas county and the City of Ellensburg. Communications between the City's and KVFR is through direct lines of communications between the two agencies.

Kittcom is a civilian staffed dispatch and 9-1-1 center that serves 17 public safety agencies in Kittitas County and also provides dispatch services to the city and its utilities.

6.0 Wildfire Risks and Drivers

The City of Ellensburg electrical utility is a municipal utility located primarily within the Ellensburg city limits with some facilities extending into the urban growth area. Electrical facilities are located in municipal areas or irrigated agricultural lands. No facilities are located in wildlands, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Ecology or forested areas. The electrical system poses a low risk of wildfire due to these geographical factors.

7.0 Wildfire Preventative Strategies

The City of Ellensburg has investigated utility best practices used to mitigate the possibility of wildfires. These include maintenance and improvements to the electrical system, and vegetation management.

Maintenance and improvements to the electrical system

- Modify/update construction standards.
- Add wildfire mitigation upgrades to the annual budget, if warranted
- Continue to investigate electrical equipment failures following an incident
- Conduct additional line patrols in designated areas where required
- Identify unfused taps and create work orders to add fusing to those locations.

System Coordination and Technology

- Disable automatic reclosing during fire weather high wind/red flag warnings and watches

Vegetation Management

- Continue to complete systematic tree trimming
- Spot trim fast growing trees

7.1 Relay and Recloser Practices

The City currently uses a “Fuse Saving” strategy for the settings and operation of the feeder reclosers. This strategy utilizes three recloser operations with the first operation being a fast operation to clear the line fault and protect the fuses on the system. The second two operations are slower to allow fuses to open when the fault has not cleared during the previous operations. If the fault has not cleared after three operations then the recloser will open and remain open until the fault has been cleared by the line crew and the recloser manually closed.

At the request of KVFR during high wildfire risk conditions the light department will place the appropriate feeders into “Hot Line Tag” operations. This changes to recloser operation by preventing the reclose function and changing the recloser settings to a fast-opening setting.

8.0 Community Outreach and Public Awareness

The City of Ellensburg Electric Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plan is available for viewing at the City of Ellensburg City Hall, 501 N Anderson St. Ellensburg, WA. 98926 or on the City of Ellensburg website at www.ci.ellensburg.wa.us.

Changes to city distribution operations during wildfire responses as outlined in this plan will be made public by the updates to the city website and its various social media outlets.

Appendix A. City of Ellensburg Light Department Service Area

