



KPUD Works to Protect Against Wildfires

In an effort to continue to reduce the risk of wildfires while continuing to provide safe, reliable power to customers, Klickitat PUD is working to implement additional preventive protections and practices to our system.

Engineering and operations staff have dedicated much of their time the last two years to preparing a wildfire mitigation plan that looks after customers and KPUD equipment. While establishing the mitigation plan, KPUD utilized specific software and services to identify or monitor potential hazards, upgraded protections on the infrastructure, bolstered the vegetation management program, and partnered with agencies throughout the county and state.

Klickitat PUD owns and maintains more than 2,200 miles of transmission and distribution lines feeding more than 13,500 customers throughout the county. Outside of established communities, many miles of line were built more than 50 years ago and across difficult—and sometimes challenging to access—terrain.

To ensure KPUD keeps its rights-of-way accessible and trees or brush clear of the lines, the utility has contracted additional line clearance crews and extended the duration of time spent working on rights-of way throughout the year to tighten our trim cycles and maintain increased clearance.

As part of the plan, KPUD has adopted several new technology platforms to help assess potential impacts on the system. KPUD is utilizing a satellite-based vegetation management company that has been an integral part of the mitigation plan, analyzing periodic satellite imagery of the rights-of-way

to help us determine vegetation growth patterns. With the information provided from the analysis and the state's wildfire hazard level map, KPUD staff is strategically allocating line clearance resources.

KPUD's geographic information system specialist has been building out mapping-based inspection programs to allow engineering staff and field personnel to perform line patrol and tree-trimming inspections and damage assessments, with data feeding back into the office in real-time. Additionally, KPUD has subscribed to daily weather forecast reports that specifically monitor Klickitat County. These reports predicted weather conditions, fire danger levels, current air quality and hazardous weather alerts. The reports are viewed by staff daily, and work is modified as needed.

With the advancement in technology and materials, engineering is designing upgrades to safeguard the electric system. Based on the state's fire hazard level map, locations have been identified for crews to upgrade older equipment with more modern materials to increase reliability and mitigate fire risk.

Klickitat PUD has partnered with local entities to ensure KPUD employees are prepared to respond to fires. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources provides the Wildland Fire Safety Training annual refresher class and certification for the RT-130 card for KPUD staff. These trainings prepare staff to work in active wildfire zones without jeopardizing firefighting efforts, and get ahead of wildfire crews to deenergize line sections to make areas safer to combat fire events.

KPUD will continue to implement a vigorous, sustainable wildfire mitigation plan to help reduce the risk of wildfires and protect the facilities that distribute power to customers' homes. ■

