

BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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BPA adds public safety power shutoff procedure to mitigate wildfires

Portland, Oregon – As climate change creates drier conditions in the Pacific Northwest during the summer months, utilities are challenged to ensure their equipment does not start or contribute to wildfires. This is why the Bonneville Power Administration has added a public safety power shutoff (PSPS) procedure to its wildfire mitigation plan to protect public safety, life and property.

“This procedure is another preventative measure layered on top of world-class vegetation management, strategic asset management and risk-based planning – the cornerstones of our mitigation efforts,” said BPA Administrator John Hairston. “BPA is committed to taking appropriate actions to prevent, mitigate and quickly recover from the devastation wildfires bring to the people and communities we serve.”

A public safety power shutoff should be rare and requires the evaluation of several different conditions, including weather and the status of the electrical system to determine a high risk of wildfire ignition. For BPA, these weather conditions include very dry ground, wind gusts above 60 mph and relative humidity below 20%.

“Taking a line out of service during a PSPS event is a measure of last resort,” said Michelle Cathcart, BPA vice president of Transmission Operations. “We recognize the important role that our transmission system plays in the Northwest and are committed to a facility-specific, risk-based decision process.”

BPA began considering a PSPS procedure in fall 2020 after last summer’s devastating and unprecedented Northwest wildfire season. Customer feedback helped inform the PSPS process put in place for the 2021 fire season. It is important to note that taking a BPA transmission line out of service does not necessarily mean Northwest residents and businesses will lose power.

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“BPA is committed to providing as much prior notification as possible to customer utilities, generators and state emergency managers, particularly when PSPS will result in service interruptions,” said Tina Ko, BPA vice president of Transmission Marketing and Sales. “Because weather is one of the variables involved, our notification windows may be compressed at times. However, we will do everything we can to help customers and emergency management officials plan for the lack of electricity these events can cause.”

BPA released its first Wildfire Mitigation Plan in 2020. The updated WMP can be viewed at the [link](#).

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale, carbon-free hydropower from 31 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin. It also markets the output of the region’s only nuclear plant. BPA delivers this power to more than 140 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA also owns and operates more than 15,000 circuit miles of high-voltage power lines and 261 substations, and provides transmission service to more than 300 customers. In all, BPA provides nearly a third of the power generated in the Northwest. To mitigate the impacts of the federal dams, BPA implements a fish and wildlife program that includes working with its partners to make the federal dams safer for fish passage. It also pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain safe, affordable, reliable electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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