



# Agenda Report

November 18, 2019

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**THROUGH:** Municipal Services Committee (November 12, 2019)  
**FROM:** Water and Power Department  
**SUBJECT:** **ADOPTION OF THE WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT'S WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed action is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to Section 21080(b)(4) of CEQA and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects) of the State CEQA Guidelines and, as such, no environmental document pursuant to CEQA is required for the project; and
2. Adopt the Water and Power Department's Wildfire Mitigation Plan as an approved operating manual to mitigate the utility's risk of causing a catastrophic wildfire.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

On November 12, 2019, the Municipal Services Committee approved staff's recommendations and requested that additional information regarding the definitions of fire hazard areas and electrical infrastructure within the "Extreme Fire Risk" areas be provided to the City Council. This information has been included as Attachment B.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Department of Water and Power ("PWP") has established a wildfire mitigation plan ("Plan") which includes various programs, policies, and a range of activities to mitigate the threat of power-line ignited wildfires. This plan complies with the requirements of California Public Utilities Code ("CPUC") section 8387 which requires that publicly-owned electric utilities prepare a wildfire mitigation plan by January 1, 2020, and annually thereafter.

The Plan's three objectives include 1) minimizing the sources of ignition; 2) improving the resiliency of the PWP electric grid; and 3) identifying unnecessary and ineffective actions.

Minimizing the sources of ignition will reduce the probability that the City's electric distribution system may be the origin or contribution source for the ignition of a fire. PWP has evaluated the cost-effective improvements to its physical assets, operations, and training by implementing changes in design and construction standards to meet this objective. For example, PWP will continue to install covered overhead wires and enhance fault current protection, equipment replacement, and tree trimming criteria within the fire threat areas defined by the CPUC fire threat map. The fire mitigation plan also identifies adjustments to operational protocol during periods of enhanced fire risk such as preventing re-energization of circuits during red flag warnings.

To improve the resiliency of PWP's electric grid, annual assessments of new industry practices and technologies will be conducted which may have the potential to reduce the likelihood of an interruption in service and improve the restoration of service.

In the event that a wildfire causes an outage, PWP customers can receive updates by calling the power outage hotline or visiting the outage map available on PWP's website.

To identify unnecessary and ineffective actions, PWP will conduct annual assessments to determine whether a particular action, program component, or protocol is determined to be ineffective or unnecessary. PWP will then determine whether modifications or replacements are warranted to produce improved or cost-effective results.

In consideration of wildfire preventative strategies, it is not currently the intent of PWP to preemptively deenergize portions of the city during periods of elevated fire risk. The primary reasons behind this strategy are 1) PWP's service territory is mostly urban and relatively small (23 square miles); 2) PWP has been using covered conductors for decades which provide more protection against incidental contacts; 3) PWP prevents automatic re-energization of circuits during red flag warnings. However, PWP has the right and authority to preemptively deenergize portions of the city and shut off power due to fire threat conditions or when power lines are compromised and will only use this option in extraordinary circumstances. In case of such an event, PWP will make every effort to provide notification to impacted customers if feasible.

PWP's efforts to mitigate catastrophic wildfires align with the City's goals to provide safe and reliable service to the citizens of Pasadena. This plan represents an update to the fire mitigation manual that Pasadena had proactively drafted several years ago. The recommendation plan has been developed in coordination with the Pasadena Fire Department. PWP will continue to collaborate with the Pasadena Fire Department in its effort to mitigate the potential to ignite wildfires

#### **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The wildfire mitigation plan is consistent with the City Council's strategic goals to maintain fiscal responsibility and stability, and to ensure public safety.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

The action proposed herein is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 21080(b)(4) of CEQA and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects) of the State CEQA Guidelines. Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(4) states that CEQA does not apply to "Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency." Accordingly, Section 15269 of the State CEQA Guidelines provides a statutory exemption for "Emergency Projects" including part (c), which includes "Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency." The adoption of the proposed Wildfire Mitigation Plan is an action to prevent and/or mitigate wildfire emergencies and is, therefore, exempt from CEQA

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The adoption of PWP's Wildfire Mitigation Plan will allow the City to pursue federal funding for projects that are not dependent on a disaster declaration and streamline the administration of disaster relief. There are no direct or indirect Fiscal Impacts from adopting the Wildfire Mitigation Plan. There will be no anticipated impact to other operational programs or capital projects as a result of this action.

Respectfully submitted,



---

GURCHARAN S. BAWA  
General Manager

Prepared by:



---

Marvin Moon  
Assistant General Manager

Approved by:



---

STEVE MERMELL  
City Manager