



Agenda Report

December 11, 2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Water and Power Department
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT'S 2024 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. Accept and approve the annual update of the Wildfire Mitigation plan for 2024 for the Water and Power Department ("PWP") as an approved operating manual to mitigate the utility's risk of causing a catastrophic wildfire. This fulfills the requirement of the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") Section 8387.

BACKGROUND:

The PWP Wildfire Mitigation Plan ("WMP") comprises various programs, objectives, policies, and a range of activities to mitigate the threat and minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by electrical lines and equipment. Since the initial adoption of the WMP in November 2019, the City Council approves annual updates and the plan is implemented by the General Manager of PWP.

The primary goal of the WMP is to minimize the probability that PWP's electric system may be the origin or contributing source for the ignition of a wildfire. The secondary goal of the WMP is to improve the resiliency of the electric grid; PWP assesses new industry practices and technologies that will reduce the likelihood of an interruption in service and improve the restoration of service. The final goal for the WMP is to measure the effectiveness of specific wildfire mitigation strategies. Where a particular action, program component, or protocol is determined to be unnecessary or ineffective, PWP will assess whether a modification or replacement is needed.

Since the adoption of the WMP, PWP has completed several key projects defined in the original plan and subsequent updates, including:

- Installation of covered conductors in Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Area on Rosemont Ave. from Washington Blvd. to Arroyo Blvd.
- Executed a pole replacement project in the Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Area, totaling 23 poles, using sectional composite poles for extra durability.
- Installation of 7,500 feet of covered conductors in the Voluntary Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Area surrounding Sequoia Dr., Anita Dr., Malcom Dr., Glenover Dr. and Glenullen Dr. Additionally, 14 poles were replaced as part of this project.
- De-energized 2,000 feet of high voltage overhead electric system in Millard Canyon, located in Tier 3 Extreme Fire Risk Area, by converting the high voltage system to a low voltage system.
- Focused inspection, repair, and replacement of overhead infrastructure in Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Areas. Within the Tier 2 areas, 548 poles were inspected ahead of their GO165 schedule, 12 poles and 4 transformers were replaced, as well as 500' of covered conductor was installed, based on the inspections.

Additional projects are ongoing or scheduled for future consideration:

- Installation of covered conductors in Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Area on Glen Oaks Blvd from Fairlawn Dr. to the El Mirador Radio tower and Reservoir. Targeting FY 2024 (Spring) Construction.
- Pole and transformer replacements in the Tier 2 Elevated Fire Risk Area.
- Conversion of the overhead high voltage (primary) lines to underground, within the Tier 3 Extreme Fire Risk Area, along Canyon Close Rd. and Fox Ridge Dr. Targeting FY 2025 Construction.
- Conversion of overhead infrastructure to underground, within the Tier 3 Extreme Fire Area, along Florecita Dr. and Crestford Dr. Targeting FY 2028 Construction.

PWP Wildfire Mitigation Plan – 2024 Update

CPUC Section 8387 requires all utilities, including PWP, to submit annual approved revisions of the WMP to the Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (WSAB) for review to ensure utilities follow current fire mitigation strategies on a calendar year basis. The content of 2024 Wildfire Mitigation Plan is largely consistent with the 2023 Wildfire Mitigation Plan and maintains the structure of the WSAB recommended template.

The key objectives of the 2024 Wildfire Mitigation Plan are as follows:

1. Minimize the Source of Fire Ignition

PWP will continue to implement programs that reduce the probability of wildfires caused by the City's electric system. The wildfire mitigation strategies will be achieved by implementing cost-effective improvements to PWP's physical assets and operations and will be driven by changes in design and construction standards. In addition to the current practices of installing covered overhead wires and enhanced fault current protection equipment, system hardening, and aggressive tree trimming within the fire threat areas defined by the CPUC fire threat map, PWP is also planning to underground the high voltage electric distribution systems in areas of extreme risks (Tier 3) to provide further wildfire mitigation.

Additionally, PWP will continue to perform regular system analysis to help identify internal risks of design and construction standards to identify threats and improve mitigation measures.

2. Resiliency Improvement

To improve the resiliency of the City's electrical distribution system, PWP continues to conduct annual assessments of new industry practices and technologies that reduce the likelihood of service interruptions and improve the restoration of service.

In the event a wildfire causes an outage, PWP customers can receive updates by calling the power outage hotline (626) 744-4673 or visiting the outage map available on PWP's website. PWP's electric system has not been the cause of any wildfires.

3. Continuous Assessment of Wildfire Mitigation Strategies

To identify unnecessary and ineffective actions, PWP continues to conduct annual assessments to determine whether a particular action, program component, or protocol is ineffective or unnecessary. PWP determines whether modifications or replacements would produce improved or cost-effective results. An annual assessment of the 2023 WMP was conducted and no significant changes to the proposed actions and plans were identified.

As with prior year WMPs, the proposed 2024 WMP does not recommend to preemptively de-energize portions of the city during periods of elevated fire risk. The primary reasons behind this strategy include 1) PWP's service territory is mainly urban and only 23 square miles; 2) PWP has been using covered conductors for decades which provide increased protection against incidental contact, reducing outage frequency and decreasing ignition risk; and 3) PWP prevents automatic re-energization of circuits during red flag warnings. However, PWP reserves the right and authority to preemptively de-energize portions of the

city and shut off power due to fire threat conditions or when power lines are compromised. This option will only be in extraordinary circumstances and PWP will attempt to provide notification to impacted customers if feasible.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The 2024 PWP 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:

There is no fiscal impact from this action. There will be no anticipated impact to other operational programs or capital projects as a result of this action.

Respectfully submitted,



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For

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