

# Wildfire Safety & Protection

Enhancing public safety and reducing risks



**Even in historically wet, mild Oregon, summers are getting hotter and drier, with longer wildfire seasons. The overall risk of wildfires is growing. We are increasing our efforts to maintain and operate our electrical lines and equipment to minimize wildfire risk and keep our customers and community safe.**

## EWEB's Wildfire Prevention Efforts

We take wildfire risk seriously and we put the safety of our customers and community first. Most of EWEB's service territory is urban, which means the threat of wildfire is relatively low. Our service areas in the McKenzie Valley and South Hills with steeper terrain and dense vegetation are at a higher risk of wildfire. High winds during dry, hot weather increase the potential for vegetation to come in contact with power lines, so we are taking several actions to mitigate this risk.

### Actions we take to enhance the safety and resiliency of our electric system include:



#### Vegetation management

We proactively prune trees, branches and shrubs to make sure they don't come in contact with power lines during high wind, snow or ice events. Maintaining clearance between trees and power lines helps reduce this risk. Each year, crews trim around 300 'line miles' of vegetation to minimize the chance of falling trees and branches. We inspect and prune an additional 250 'line miles' in high-risk areas such as south Eugene and the McKenzie Valley.



#### System inspection and maintenance

We conduct routine and proactive maintenance on more than 725 miles of overhead power lines to ensure our system is safe and reliable. We visually patrol and inspect the system and components, and replace worn or aging equipment throughout the system. Like our additional vegetation maintenance, we inspect areas with a higher risk of wildfire more frequently.



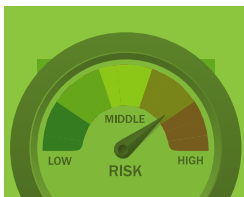
#### Proactive grid-hardening investments

We actively seek opportunities to replace older equipment such as power poles, crossarms and wires. In some cases, we take certain overhead distribution lines and put them underground. We are also starting to install more fire-resistant equipment, such as using ductile iron instead of wooden poles in a recently completed transmission line project in the upper McKenzie Valley.



#### Situational 'wildfire season' awareness

Situational awareness during fire season includes monitoring weather for high winds and low humidity, modifying field work practices to be more fire aware, bringing fire suppression equipment to every work site, and increased coordination with public safety partners when crews are working in areas with high fuel loads.



#### Power line protective measures

When weather conditions indicate there is a high risk of wildfire, we change the protective settings on our equipment in south Eugene and the McKenzie Valley. These protective measures include modifying high-voltage electric switches and relays. Just like a circuit breaker in your home, the switch senses when trouble occurs – such as a tree branch falling on the line – and shuts off the power. We will not reenergize the line until we visually inspect it and confirm with public safety partners there is no fire in the area.



#### Red flag warnings

We activate this extra level of protection in areas at higher risk for wildfire when the National Weather Service issues a Red Flag Warning – typically related to high winds, high temperatures and low humidity. While enhanced protective settings help reduce wildfire risk, customers should anticipate that it will take longer to restore power when these more sensitive settings are in place.



## Preparing for Outages

Most wildfires are started by lightning strikes or caused by human actions. Regardless of cause, if a fire starts in an area with power infrastructure, we may de-energize that part of the system. We are generally able to shut the system down in sections, and we work to minimize the size of the shutdown to affect as few customers as possible. The length and duration of a fire-related outage will vary based on where in the system it occurs and the situation on the ground.

Our goal is to provide safe and reliable power, but outages can happen year-round, not just during winter snow or ice storms. You should be prepared for 14 days without power. Unlike a winter outage, preparedness for a summer outage includes methods to stay cool and hydrated.

### 1 Emergency Plan Basics

**You should be prepared to manage 14 days without power.**

Be sure to plan with the following categories in mind:

- **Food and refrigeration/food preservation** (coolers, ice)
- **Cooking plan** (BBQ, cookstove and fuel – outside only)
- **Water** (have supplies of stored water and a plan if your home is served by a well)
- **Medical** (prescriptions, devices, first aid)
- **Pets and livestock** (food, water, evacuation plan)
- **Electronics, chargers, batteries**
- **Communications** (plan for charging, printed contact lists, radio)
- **Records** (vaccination records, insurance cards, ID, etc.)
- **Access** (manual overrides for electronic doors and garages)

**FOR ADDITIONAL PLANNING TIPS, GO TO:**

[EWEB.ORG/EMERGENCYPREP](http://EWEB.ORG/EMERGENCYPREP)

### 2 Know Your Zone and Evacuation Level

If we are in an active fire situation, be sure that you know your evacuation level and how to get out. Alerts will come from Lane County and public safety support.

**MORE ABOUT EVACUATION LEVELS:** [EWEB.ORG/WILDFIRE](http://EWEB.ORG/WILDFIRE)

**TO SIGN UP FOR ALERTS AND LEARN MORE, GO TO:**

[PUBLIC.ALERTSENSE.COM/SIGNUP](http://PUBLIC.ALERTSENSE.COM/SIGNUP)

### 3 Plan for the Medically Fragile

Take a few moments to make sure we have your current contact information in case we need to reach out to you in an emergency. If you rely on electrically powered medical devices, or you care for someone who is medically fragile, we encourage you to let us know and to have a contingency plan in the event of a prolonged outage. **Contact us by email at [eweb.answers@eweb.org](mailto:eweb.answers@eweb.org).**

## Working All Year to Keep You Safe!



### YEAR-ROUND SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Ongoing maintenance and system hardening; robust tree-trimming program.



### TARGETED VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

More frequent inspection and pruning along 250 'line miles' in higher risk areas.



### SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Weather monitoring, fire aware work practices, outreach and education during wildfire season.



### EXTREME RISK MANAGEMENT

Protective equipment settings. De-energize lines as a last resort.

**Learn more about wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning here: [eweb.org/wildfire](http://eweb.org/wildfire). Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for the latest updates and emergency information.**



# Understanding Oregon's Fire Hardening Grant Program

If your home or business was lost or damaged in a wildfire during 2020, you may be eligible to receive more than \$6,000 in grant money for fire hardening of your home or business.

Local counties and the Department of Consumer and Business Services have created a fire hardening grant program to help people affected by the 2020 wildfires. The program will provide money directly to home and business owners who receive a grant to help pay for fire hardening of a home or business that was damaged or destroyed in the 2020 wildfires.

## What is fire hardening?

Fire hardening describes steps that can be taken to make a home or business more resistant to damage from a wildfire. These steps may include the following:

- Using ignition resistant materials for siding and roofing
- Installing fire resistant windows to protect openings
- Using attic ventilation devices that help reduce ember intrusion

## Why is fire hardening important?

Fire hardening, along with creating defensible space by maintaining vegetation and reducing combustible materials surrounding the home or business, decreases the likelihood that a nearby fire will ignite your structure and reduces the potential for damage.

Fire hardening makes the community more resistant to the spread of wildfire. By slowing down a fire, it may create additional time and opportunity for emergency responders to protect life and property threatened by the fire.

## How do I participate?

The program is being run through your county's building department which will be accepting applications and verifying fire hardening work to process your application. You can also visit the program's web page listed below. On that page you will find links to the application for each affected county. You will also find an explanation of the fire hardening improvements that the program is incentivizing and the value of the different grants that are available.



[www.oregon.gov/bcd/Pages/firehardening.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/bcd/Pages/firehardening.aspx)

Please visit the program web page to learn more and to find an application.