

**City of Cheney Electric Utility Wildfire  
Mitigation Plan**  
October 31, 2024

## 1.0 Executive Summary

When the Washington Legislature passed [House Bill 1032](#) in July 2023 it stated that, *it is in the best interest of the state, our citizens, and our natural resources to identify the sources of wildland fires; identify and implement best practices to reduce the prevalence and intensity of those wildland fires; put those practices in place; and by putting those practices in place, reduce the risk of wildland fires and damage and losses resulting from those fires.*

The Legislature directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in consultation with the Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office of the Department of Commerce, to contract with an independent consultant with experience in developing electric utility wildfire mitigation plans to develop an electric utility wildfire mitigation plan format and a list of elements to be included in electric utility wildfire mitigation plans. The Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) format below achieves the direction of the Legislature.

By October 31, 2024, and every three years thereafter, each consumer-owned utility and investor-owned utility must review, if appropriate revise, and adopt its wildfire mitigation plan. When reviewing or revising a wildfire mitigation plan, utilities must use the recommended format and elements contained in the WMP format below. The plan must be submitted to the utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee created in RCW 76.04.780 to be posted on their website.

The template and list of elements included were developed in conjunction with the Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee, electric utilities, the state fire marshal, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and the public. The WMP format is intended to function as a guide and provide utilities with suggested elements for their plan which are informed by best practices demonstrated to reduce the prevalence and intensity of wildfires and which reduce the risk of wildfire and the resulting damage and losses.

Each section of the WMP format provides suggested topics, language, and guidance for its completion. This cover letter provides additional guidance to assist utilities in filling out the WMP format with relevant information. It is recognized that each utility faces unique geography, terrain, vegetation, and other characteristics that will present a variety of risk levels and result in unique and tailored approaches to address that risk. To that end, the WMP format has been designed to accommodate a broad range of recommended elements. It is not expected that all utilities will have practices or even a need to complete all sections or elements to the same degree. There are no statutory requirements directing what utilities must include in their plans. It is at the discretion of each utility to determine the elements applicable to its own wildfire mitigation efforts and the level of detail necessary to describe each element.

### **Contact information**

**Washington Department of Natural Resources:** <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/>

**Wildfire Resources:** <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/wildfire-resources>

**Washington State Department of Commerce:** <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/>

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## 2.0 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Overview

### 2.1 Purpose of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan

This Wildfire Mitigation Plan describes in detail the range of activities that the City Utility is taking to mitigate the threat of utility involved wildfires, including various programs, policies, and procedures. This plan complies with the requirements of HB1032 for customer owned electric utilities (COU) to prepare a wildfire mitigation plan by October 31, 2024, and every three years thereafter.

### 2.2 Description of Where WMP Can be Found Online

WMP information can be found online at the city website: [Cheney, WA | Official Website \(cityofcheney.org\)](http://Cheney, WA | Official Website (cityofcheney.org)).

### 2.3 Best Practices Cross-Reference Table

Standard or Best Practice Name and Description	Document, page number, or citation
Line Clearance Program	Section 5.1, page 3
Inland Power and Mutual Aid Agreement	Section 5.1, page 3
Cheney Fire Department	Section 5.3, page 3

## 3.0 Utility Overview

### 3.1 Utility Description and Context Setting Table

The City of Cheney Electric Utility serves approximately 6,000 customers within the city and a few outside city limits in Spokane County. There are two substations which encompass seven feeders to make up the entire power distribution system. Power is purchased from the Bonneville Power Administration and wheeled to the city substations by Avista Power. Only 2% of the total service area of the city is rural and could be considered wildfire territory. The other 98% of the service area is within an urban setting with a fire station ready to respond.

**Table 1. Context-Setting Information Table**

Utility Name	City of Cheney
Service Territory Size (sq miles)	4.37
Service Territory Make-up	98% Urban 2% Agriculture
Service Territory Wildland Urban Interface (based on total area)	1% Wildland Urban Interface 1% Wildland Urban Intermix
Customers Served	6,000
Account Demographic	92% Residential

<p><i>[Note: Please provide as a percent of total customers served]</i></p>	<p>8% Commercial/Industrial</p>
<p><b>Utility Equipment Make-up (circuit miles)</b> Line Miles measured in GIS mapping system.</p>	<p>Overhead Dist.: 89.24 Underground Dist.: 58.23</p>
<p><b>Has developed protocols to pre-emptively shut off electricity in response to elevated wildfire risks?<sup>1</sup></b></p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> A summary or description of protocols can be provided in section 7.</p>
<p><b>Has previously pre-emptively shut off electricity in response to elevated wildfire risk?</b></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  If yes, then provide the following data for the three trailing calendar years: Number of shut-off events: 0 Customer Accounts that lost service for &gt;10 minutes: [N/A] For prior response, average duration before service restored: [ N/A]</p>

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<sup>1</sup> For many utilities this will be a reference to a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) event. These events, whether through a formally defined PSPS program or not, are recognized as a safety measure of last resort initiated by utilities to pre-emptively de-energize specific powerlines during critical fire weather to reduce the risk of the electric system being involved in an ignition. The decision to either have or not have this type of practice is at the operational discretion of the individual utility.

## **4.0 Objectives of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan**

### **4.1 Minimizing likelihood of ignition**

*In order to reduce the likelihood of ignitions from energized equipment the city has instituted an annual line clearance program funded at \$100,000 per year. This provides approximately 10 weeks of a 4-man tree trimming and removal crew that mitigate trees that pose a hazard to the city distribution system. Also, the linemen have a skid steer with a flail mover attachment to cut vegetation that is beneath the seven distribution feeders that are in open and rugged terrain.*

### **4.2 Resiliency of the electric grid**

*The city's ability to withstand fire weather conditions has vastly improved due to the proactive removal of direct fire risks to the distribution system. Through these actions, the resiliency of the electric grid is very stable. Few interruptions occur due to the fire weather conditions. Services are quickly restored if interrupted by on-call lineman when notified by a 24-hour reporting system and local fire, police and residents notifying the city.*

## **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **5.1 Utility Roles and Responsibilities**

*The city has the responsibility to keep its' power lines clear of vegetation which is accomplished via the annual line clearance program. The program includes an outside contractor to perform annual line clearance and tree removal in the city as directed by the Light Department and funded to \$100,000 per year for the next three years. Lineman from the Light Department also clear lines as needed but focuses primarily on vegetation under the feeder lines through the rural area or emergency removals that threaten fire or the system.*

### **5.2 Coordination with local utility and infrastructure providers**

*The city also has in place, letters of agreement to share personnel and assets with Inland Power, Avista Power and Gas, and if called upon, Spokane County for a mass conflagration. The city fire department is the primary responder to a fire event within the distribution system and is backed up by Fire District Three and Spokane County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) on a grand scale.*

*Avista Power and Gas wheels the city's power to the city's Four Lakes Substation. Avista recently instituted a Power Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) policy that the city is subject to in times of wildfire risk mitigation by Avista. If Avista executed a PSPS on the lines that serve the city power, then the city would be out of power completely. The city is in close communication with Avista concerning PSPS but have been assured that it is highly improbable that this would occur to the city.*

### **5.3 Emergency Management / Incident Response Organization**

*The city Fire Department coordinates all efforts with County agencies as well as other relevant local and state agencies to establish roles, responsibilities, and structure of communication for emergency management system alerts. Coordination efforts may include but are not limited to:*

- *Emergency management system structure during red flag conditions and wildfires.*

- *Relevant training exercises the utility may participate in relating to red flag conditions and wildfires.*

## **6.0 Wildfire Risks and Drivers Associated with Design, Construction, Operation, and Maintenance**

### **6.1 Risks and risk drivers associated with topographic and climatological risk factors**

*The primary risk drivers for wildfires specific to the city's service area is hot, dry and windy conditions where a power line is down, or a piece of farm equipment ignites the vegetation.*

*Examples of risk drivers are:*

- *Extended drought.*
- *High winds.*
- *Farming equipment during end of summer harvest.*
- *Homeless encampments.*
- *Vegetation type.*

### **6.2 Enterprise-wide Safety Risks**

*Describe the utility's methodology for identifying and assessing enterprise-wide safety risks related to wildfires.*

*Risk areas may include:*

- *Operational*
- *Procedural*
- *System Sensitivities*

*Example risk drivers may include:*

- *Contact from Object (i.e., animal, balloon, vegetation, vehicle).*
- *Equipment / Facility Failure (i.e., Capacitor Bank, Conductor, Crossarm, Fuse, Insulator, Transformer, etc.).*
- *Wire to Wire Contact*

## **7.0 Wildfire Preventative Strategies**

### **7.1 Weather Monitoring**

#### **7.1.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*The city monitors the weather daily along with the Fire Department, Avista Power and Gas, Inland Power and Light and Spokane County. Red Flag warnings are issued by Spokane County which automatically activate the City's One-Shot Policy for the substations. Also monitored by the Fire Department and conveyed to the city are the following:*

- *United States National Weather Service*
- *United States Forest Service Wildland Fire Assessment System*
- *National Fire Danger Rating System*



### **7.1.2 Planned Updates**

*There are no planned updates to the weather monitoring system since Spokane County DEM is the primary source and extremely reliable and their communication with the City's Fire Department is excellent.*

## **7.2 Design and Construction Standards**

### **7.2.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*No system re-design is anticipated. The current distribution system is limited outside city limits in the potential wildfire areas. No additional buildout is necessary at this time. The plan is to maintain the existing distribution lines and keep all vegetation away from the lines in the air and around them.*

### **7.2.2 Planned Updates**

*There are no planned updates for the redesign of the distribution system.*

## **7.3 Fuel & Vegetation Management, Inspections and Response**

### **7.3.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*The city's vegetation management consists of inner-city line clearance via a contractor and immediate threats by the lineman. The distribution feeders from the substations that run through rural areas outside the city are cleared by the Light Departments staff annually. Investment in equipment such as a skid steer with a flail mower to remove these hazards has been made in recent years. Each feeder is inspected each year for possible wildfire fuel and threats and is quickly mitigated by removal of such.*

### **7.3.2 Planned Updates**

*No planned updates other than continual vigilance through line inspections and removal of potential wildfire fuel.*

## **7.4 Workforce training**

### **7.4.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*All Linemen are trained in tree removal and vegetation management with refresher training annually.*

## **7.5 Relay and Recloser Practices**

### **7.5.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*In times of fire elevated risk, the city institutes its "One Shot" policy sets the reclosers to open on the first fault and not reset automatically. See 7.6.1*

### **7.5.2 Planned Updates**

*Plans are to upgrade the Cheney Substation with all new equipment in 2026, therefore improving the capabilities of monitoring and switching power.*

## **7.6 De-energization / Public Safety Power Shutoff**

### **7.6.1 Current Strategy Overview**

*De-energization would only occur if a fire was an imminent threat to the distribution system. Normally, the power would be rerouted from the northern substation to the southern or vice versa to ensure power to our 6,000 customers in the city. The city has established a “One Shot” policy that is a safety mode. It instructs the Light Department to switch its substations to a setting that shuts down when there is one fault detected. This mode is instituted during high-risk fire conditions, such as a “Red Flag Warning” issued by Spokane County in coordination with the National Weather System.*

### **7.6.2 Planned Updates**

*The city plans on updating the southern substation “Cheney Substation” with new reclosures and to also upgrade the connection of power from one substation to another to ensure continuity and power supply to the city.*

## **8.0 Community Outreach and Public Awareness**

### **8.1 Current Community Outreach and Public Awareness Program**

*Community outreach is accomplished annually through the city’s website, billing mailers and emails to those who subscribe to the city news alerts. Information is given to the citizens in order to prep them for the line clearance crews working in their neighborhoods and explains their responsibilities as to vegetation management on the properties they occupy. Points of contact through emails and phone numbers are given to the customers to report problem trees or vegetation, and also outlines their responsibilities to keep their vegetation out of city lines and to not accumulate fuel of any sort under the power lines.*

## **9.0 Restoration of Service**

*Service restoration is completed after a visual inspection of the entire feeder that was de-energized to ensure all threats to the system are mitigated. This inspection is performed by the Light Department Lineman to ensure re-energization is safe.*

## **10.0 Evaluating the Plan**

*This plan is a living document that can be changed at any time to improve the success of preventing wildfire damage to the system. As pertinent procedures or information comes to light, the modifications to the plan will be made after discussion at the monthly safety meeting.*

### **10.1 Metrics and Assumptions for Measuring Plan Performance**

*Measuring the Plans performance will be based upon the monthly safety meeting review, continuing the city’s line clearance program, coordinating with the local fire department, the county and local utilities such as Avista Utilities and Inland Power and Light.*

***10.2 Identifying and Addressing Areas of Continued Improvement in the Plan***

*This is the first submission of the plan and improvements will be reported in the next submission in three years.*

***10.3 Monitoring the Performance of Inspections***

*It is the Light Department Director who will monitor the performance of the plan with the assistance of the department Foreman through the monthly department Safety meeting.*

DocuSigned by:  
***Chris Grover***  
0FAEA76D1FFA401

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Chris Grover, Mayor

Appendix A. None