



Legislation Text

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REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 06/16/2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Department of Water and Power

SUBJECT:

Resolution adopting the City of Corona Department of Water and Power 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

For compliance under Senate Bill 901, Senate Bill 1054 requires that all publicly-owned utilities must update their wildfire mitigation plans annually to address any conditional changes to the electrical system that might alter the previous plan and to submit the new plan to the Wildfire Safety Advisory Board by July 1st of each year.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council adopt Resolution No. 2021-051, adopting the City of Corona Department of Water and Power Electric Utility 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan and Informational Response.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

In 2008, the California Public Utilities Commission initiated a proceeding to address fires related to utility infrastructure, following a series of wildfires in 2007 and 2008. This proceeding aimed to establish new industry standards that would reduce the risk of electric line-ignited wildfires, with a focus on areas of the state where wildfire risks are elevated. In 2012, the California Public Utilities Commission adopted three interim fire maps that designated areas of the State where stricter inspection and vegetation clearance requirements would apply to overhead utility poles and equipment. These interim maps were based on generalized wildfire threats rather than areas at a unique risk of electric line-ignited fires. The California Public Utilities Commission acknowledged the need for a better map. In the same 2012 decision, the California Public Utilities Commission directed parties to develop a more precise statewide fire map that identified areas of the State at an elevated risk of electric line-ignited wildfires.

In 2016, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 1028, which required publicly-owned utilities to identify

additional wildfire mitigation measures that could be taken if the publicly-owned utility's governing Board found that its overhead electric lines and equipment posed a significant risk of causing a catastrophic wildfire. Senate Bill 1028 required that the publicly-owned utility's governing board base this determination on "historical fires and local conditions" and consult with local fire departments and other entities with responsibilities to control wildfires within the relevant area. These requirements were specified in the newly added Public Utilities Code Section 8387.

In 2018, the California Public Utilities Commission completed the development of the statewide Fire Threat Map that designates areas of the State that have an elevated risk of electric-line-ignited wildfires. This updated map incorporated historical fire data, fire-behavior modeling, fuel assessments, weather modeling, and a host of other factors. The map development and approval process involved detailed review by the relevant utility staff and local fire officials, a peer review process, and ultimate approval by a team of technical experts led by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The California Public Utilities Commission's Fire Threat Map includes three Tiers/Levels of fire threat risk. Tier 1 consists of areas that have the lowest hazards and risks. Tier 2 consists of areas where there is an *elevated risk* for destructive electric-line-ignited wildfires. Finally, Tier 3 consists of areas where there is an *extreme risk* for destructive electric line-ignited wildfires.

ANALYSIS:

The Department of Water and Power (DWP) staff reviewed the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC's) Fire Threat Map and determined that no City of Corona DWP overhead electric lines or equipment, consisting of 3 poles spanning roughly 78 Feet and totaling approximately 105 linear feet of overhead cable, including the dive to underground cable, are located in an area designated as either Tier 2 (elevated risk) or Tier 3 (extreme risk). Staff also reviewed historical fire data and local conditions. Based on this review, staff concluded DWP's electric lines and equipment have minimal overhead exposure and did not pose a significant wildfire risk. On September 19, 2018, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2018-099, which adopted staff's recommendation and found that DWP's overhead electric lines and equipment did not pose a significant risk of causing a catastrophic wildfire. Under Senate Bill 1028 (SB 1028), DWP was not required to identify any additional wildfire mitigation measures.

In 2018, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 901 (SB 901), which addressed a wide range of wildfire prevention, response, and recovery issues. SB 901 substantially revised Public Utilities Code (PUC) Section 8387, eliminating the prior process established by SB 1028 and making it mandatory for all publicly-owned utilities (POUs) (regardless of size or wildfire risk) to develop a wildfire mitigation plan. Under the amended PUC Section 8387, all POUs must present a wildfire mitigation plan to their governing Board before January 1, 2020, and annually thereafter. POU Section 8387(b)(2) specifies the topics that must be addressed in the POU wildfire mitigation plans, which includes: (a) the responsibilities of the persons tasked with executing the plan; (b) a description of the POU's wildfire mitigation preventative strategies and programs; (c) a description of the metrics the POU will use to evaluate the wildfire mitigation plan's performance and discussion of how those metrics informed the current wildfire mitigation plan; (d) protocols for disabling reclosers and de-energizing portions of the electrical system; and (e) identification, description, and prioritization of all wildfire risks within the POU's service territory.

SB 901 requires that POUs must present their wildfire mitigation plan at an appropriately noticed public meeting and receive public comment. The POU must also verify that the wildfire mitigation plan complies with all applicable rules, regulations, and standards.

In 2019, two new bills, Senate Bill 1054 (SB 1054) and Senate Bill 111 (SB 111), resulted in significant additional reforms relating to wildfires. As part of these reforms, SB 111 created a new state agency called the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (Board). The Board will consist of seven members, five appointed by the Governor, one appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, and one appointed by the Senate Rules Committee. The board members must be selected from industry experts, academics, and people with labor and workforce safety experience. At least three members must be experienced in safe operation, design, and electrical infrastructure engineering. SB 1054 requires that all POUs submit their wildfire mitigation plans to the Board by July 1st of each year, starting in 2020. The Board will then review the POU plans and provide comments and advisory opinions on the content and sufficiency of the plans.

According to PUC Section 8387, DWP has prepared the required wildfire mitigation plan. Staff has reviewed the Department of Water and Power 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan and concluded that the plan meets all the required criteria as provided in PUC Section 8387. DWP presents the 2021 plan, with no changes from the 2020 plan as adopted, and has made the plan available on the City's Department of Water and Power website. Staff's recommendation is for the City Council to adopt Resolution No. 2021-051 adopting the Department of Water and Power 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan as required by California state law pursuant to SB 901.

As requested by the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (WSAB), DWP has also completed the Informational Response Document responding to each of the recommendations included in the WSAB 2021 Guidance Advisory Opinion. The WSAB issued the *Guidance Advisory Opinion for the 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plans of Electric Publicly Owned Utilities and Cooperatives (2021 WSAB Guidance Advisory Opinion)* on December 15, 2020. DWP provides this Informational Response as a supplemental informational appendix to the Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This document will be submitted to the WSAB to respond to each of the 2021 WSAB Guidance Advisory Opinion recommendations.

The Department of Water and Power will submit the adopted 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan and Informational Response to the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board before July 1, 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of the recommended action.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not

subject to CEQA. This action approves a plan for the implementation of preventive strategies and mitigation measures to minimize the risk of wildfires caused by electrical lines and equipment. There is no possibility that adopting the Wildfire Mitigation Plan will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, the item is exempt from CEQA.

PREPARED BY: CURTIS SHOWALTER, ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER IV

REVIEWED BY: TOM MOODY, GENERAL MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1 - Resolution No. 2021-051
2. Exhibit 2 - Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2021 Informational Response