

Wildfire Mitigation Plan



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Cooperative, Inc.**

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Message from the Board President and General Manager

Within this document are the actions your cooperative, Lincoln Electric, is taking to protect the members and communities we serve from wildfire threats. The changes to the environment we serve include more housing development in our forested areas, restricted forest thinning, and drying conditions within our forests.

We, at LEC, have to take a responsible role in doing what we can, as your electric provider, to limit the potential for our facilities causing a wildfire. These actions include continued upgrades of our system, replacement of broken or worn hardware, implementation of technology advancements, and clearing of our rights-of-way, while working with adjacent landowners to clear danger trees that may impact our lines.

We take this responsibility seriously, to protect you, our members, and your property. This Wildfire Mitigation Plan, as mandated by HB 490 of the 2025 Montana legislature, formally documents the actions we have taken, and will take in the future, to limit our potential for wildfire ignitions.

Thank you for being a Lincoln Electric Cooperative member.



Rick Peterson
Board President



Matt Quinn
General Manager

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Abbreviations

BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
ELF	Energy Limiting Fuse
LEC	Lincoln Electric Cooperative
NESC	National Electrical Safety Code
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NWS	National Weather Service
PSPS	Public Safety Power Shutoff
ROW	Right-Of-Way
TSII	TripSaver II
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
V or KV	Volts or kilovolts
VI	Vacuum Interrupter
WFAS	Wildland Fire Assessment System
WMP	Wildfire Mitigation Plan

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1. OVERVIEW

In 2025, the State of Montana passed HB490, which requires all electric facilities providers in the state to prepare a wildfire mitigation plan (WMP). These plans are to direct utilities to develop operational policies and practices to prevent, prepare for and respond to wildfire events. WMPs are likely to be evaluated or updated on an annual basis and may be subject to board approval.

Fire mitigation plays an essential role in Lincoln Electric Cooperative's (LEC's) operational practices. Its existing policies, programs and procedures are designed to directly or indirectly manage or reduce this risk. Over the years, LEC has adopted additional fire mitigation programs to adjust to changes in the burning environment, adopted technological advances and improved operational practices to further mitigate the potential for ignitions and more effectively respond to apex wildfire risk conditions.

The purpose of this Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) is to document the strategies, programs, and procedures in place to mitigate the threat of electrical equipment ignited wildfires by LEC. The WMP addresses the unique features of its service territory, such as topography, weather, infrastructure, grid configuration, and areas most prone to wildfire risks. The plan includes the maintenance of its transmission and distribution assets, as well as the management of vegetation in the right-of-way (ROW) areas that contain these assets.

The WMP is a living document that will be reassessed routinely as projects and initiatives are proposed and completed. LEC's Board of Trustees reviews, and approves the WMP as needed, while the General Manager is responsible for its implementation. Primary accountability for plan implementation resides with the Engineering Manager.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE WMP

The main objective is to implement an actionable plan to create increased reliability and safety while minimizing the likelihood that LEC assets may be the origin or contributing factor in the ignition of a wildfire. The mitigation programs and strategies will comply with Montana law, and National Electric Safety Code (NESC) regulations and guidelines. To help develop the Plan, LEC compared emerging technologies that not only reduce the likelihood of service interruption but also minimize the risk of ignition from the fault causing the outage.

The secondary objective is to measure, through the annual evaluation of certain performance metrics, the effectiveness of the specific wildfire mitigation strategies. Where a particular action, program component or protocol proves unnecessary or ineffective, LEC will assess whether modification or replacement is suitable.

LEC will periodically review this plan, if applicable, with state or local agencies regarding wildland fire protection plans or wildfire mitigation plans (HB490).

3. LEC PROFILE AND HISTORY

Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. (LEC) is a not-for-profit, member-owned corporation founded in 1948. LEC's service territory includes Lincoln and Flathead counties. In 2014, LEC created Rural Propane Services (RPS), a wholly owned subsidiary of LEC to provide its members with additional energy options.

As a utility cooperative, LEC is governed by an eight-member, popularly elected Board of Trustees that determines policy and appoints the General Manager who is responsible for LEC's overall management and operations.

LEC Mission Statement

To provide reliable energy,
at reasonable rates, with
exceptional member service
and commitment to the
communities we serve.

4. SERVICE AREA

Nestled in the northwest corner of Montana, LEC is headquartered in the town of Eureka (Figure 1). LEC's geographic service territory is west and east from the west side of Lake Koocanusa to the Rocky Mountain Front. The service area is primarily located within the Tobacco Valley and Highway 93 corridor northwest of the city of Whitefish. The service territory spans a large, **rural and mountainous area**, covering approximately **1,200 square miles**. The region includes small towns and remote communities, with infrastructure spread out serving a sparse population. The valley is heavily forested with extensive timber resources and is known for its wilderness areas. See Figure 2 for LEC's service territory in reference to towns and county lines.

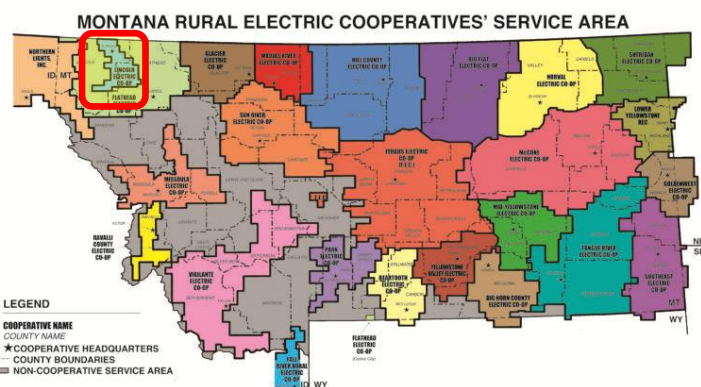
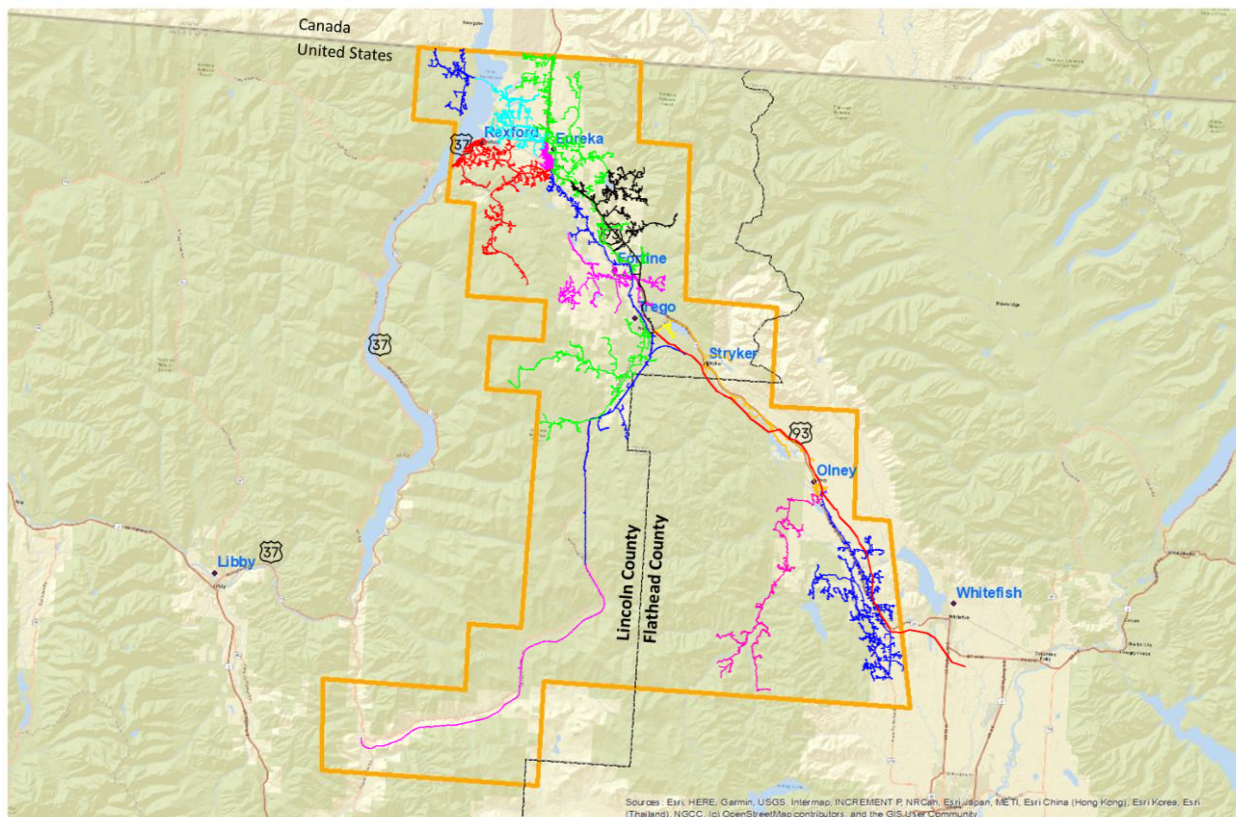


Figure 1 - LEC Service Territory in the State of Montana



Service Area Map

Figure 2 - LEC Service Territory and County Lines

Learn more about LEC at www.LincolnElectric.coop.

5. UTILITY ASSETS

The following table outlines LEC's utility assets and facilities. Figure 3, on the next page, shows the substation locations within the service area.

Power Supply	Power supplier: PNGC Regional Transmission: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
Substations	Stillwater Substation 115 kV to 14.4/24.9 kV, 13/17/22 MVA Trego Substation 115 kV to 14.4/24.9 kV, 12/16/20 MVA 6/7.5 MVA Eureka Substation 115 kV to 14.4/24.9 kV, 20/26.7/33.3 MVA Tunnel Substation 14.4/24.9 kV to 2400/4160 V, 3.75 MVA
Counties Served	Lincoln and Flathead
Miles of Line	Overhead Distribution: 494.4 Underground Distribution: 508.1 Overhead Transmission: 16.7 Total: 1,019.2
Meters	Residential: 6,176 Small Commercial: 637 Irrigation: 55 Large Commercial: 59 Industrial: 2 Public Street & Highway: 4 Total: 6,933
System Operating Voltages	Primary Distribution: 14.4/24.9 kV

Table 1 - LEC Utility Assets¹

¹ As of October 20, 2025. Sourced from LEC's Form 7 data.

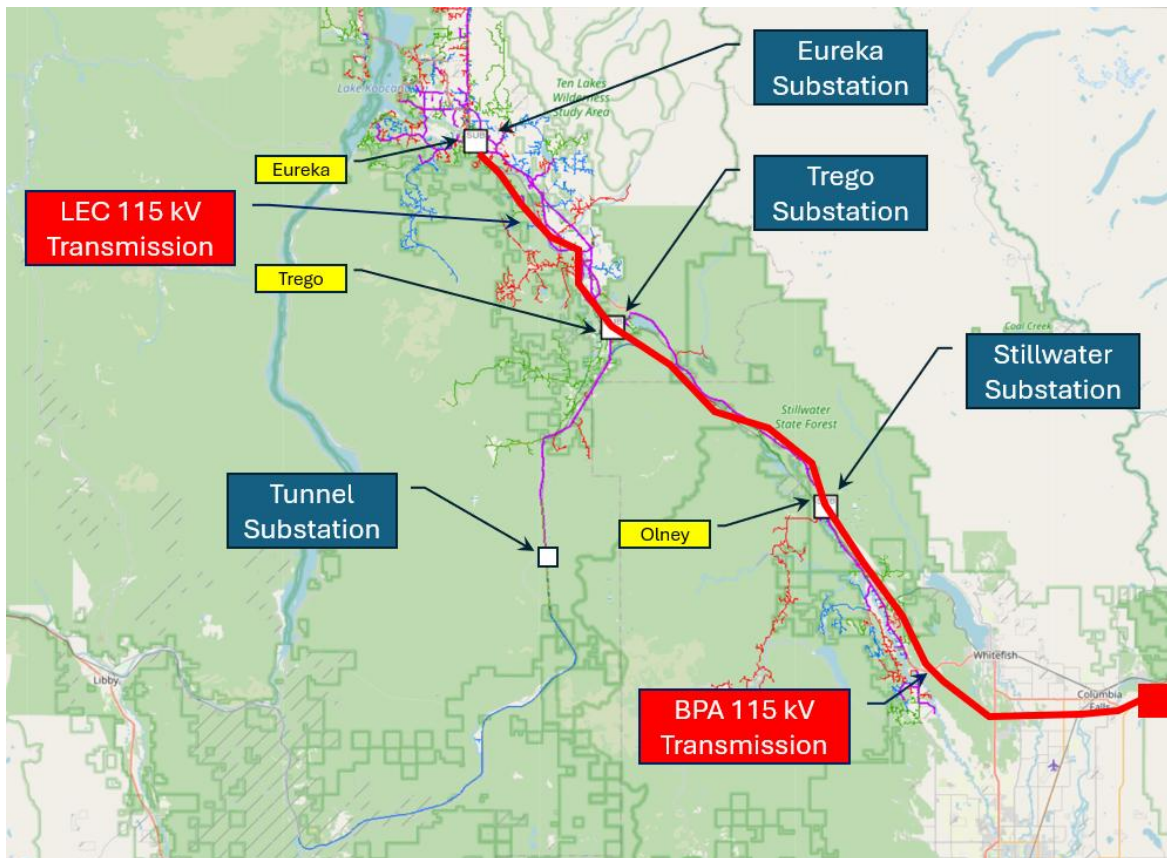


Figure 3 - LEC Substations and Transmission Facilities

6. OVERVIEW OF LEC'S FIRE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

This WMP integrates and interfaces with LEC's existing operations plans, asset management, and engineering principles, which are themselves subject to change. Future iterations of the WMP will reflect any changes to these strategies and will incorporate new best management practices as they are developed and adopted. Table 2 summarizes LEC's five mitigation components with associated programs and activities that support LEC's ongoing commitment to wildfire prevention and mitigation.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	• Strategic undergrounding of distribution lines • Field recloser to vacuum-type breaker change-out program • Covered jumpers and animal guards • Avian protection construction standards • Substation perimeter fencing for security and protection
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INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE	• Infrared inspections of substation equipment • Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for transmission and distribution line inspections • Infrared and LiDAR inspection program • Wood pole intrusive inspection and testing • Enhanced T&D vegetation right-of-way maintenance • Distribution system line patrols and detailed inspections • Transmission and distribution system vegetation management program • Removal of hazard trees in power line rights-of-way
OPERATIONAL PRACTICES	• Work procedures and fire hazard training for work within locations with elevated fire risk conditions • Community outreach/wildfire safety awareness • Contractor/staff safety training and orientation for vegetation management work • Alternate recloser settings during severe wildfire warnings • Fire suppression equipment on worksite during fire season • Provide liaison to county offices of emergency services (OES) during fire events
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS	• Weather monitoring in the service area • Monitoring active fires in the region
RESPONSE AND RECOVERY	• Coordination with local agencies as applicable • Line patrols on power lines opened by system protective devices before re-energization • Emergency restoration plan

Table 2 - Mitigation Strategies and Activities

7. LEC WILDFIRE MITIGATION COMMITMENT

7.1. A Continuous Improvement Approach

LEC has consistently prioritized the safe and reliable operation of its electric system for the benefit of its members. Every year staff will develop capital improvement projects that will replace aging infrastructure and improve system reliability. Likewise, informal wildfire strategies have been in place for many years. This WMP formalizes many of these procedures into one document.

This ongoing process underscores LEC's commitment to continually enhancing wildfire risk reduction efforts and adapting to evolving conditions.

7.2. Financial Considerations

Funding for wildfire mitigation initiatives will be integrated into Lincoln Electric Cooperative's annual budget, which is reviewed and approved by the LEC Board of Trustees.

8. UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING WILDFIRE RISKS

Wildfire risk factors include environmental conditions, population growth and development, aging infrastructure, and potential impacts on human health and property. To better understand the specific vulnerabilities, LEC has conducted asset-based risk modeling. This approach evaluates the likelihood of wildfire ignition near facilities and guides mitigation activities aimed at significantly reducing this risk.

LEC is publishing this WMP as part of an ongoing commitment to deliver safe, reliable, cost-effective electric service to its members. LEC is actively involved in industry conversations relating to reducing impacts from wildfires and taking steps to reinforce a fire safe culture. LEC's awareness of key drivers associated with wildfire risk and opportunities to mitigate risk continues to mature. The Cooperative is committed to continuously learning and improving the approach to reduce the overall risk of wildfires to its members, communities, and the environment. LEC will continue to update the WMP and communicate efforts to ensure coordination with members, emergency responders, communities, regulators and stakeholders.

8.1. Wildfire Likelihood

Wildfire likelihood is the probability of wildfire burning in any given year. It does not specify the intensity of fire if it occurs. Communities in all but the lowest risk areas need to be prepared for wildfire. Wildfire likelihood can be difficult to modify, but preventing ignitions and managing fuels can help.

8.2. State and County Risk Overview

The risk assessments utilize datasets developed by wildfirerisk.org (WRO), created through a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and various federal agencies. These tools help community leaders and fire managers understand how wildfire risk varies across regions and prioritize actions accordingly.

The insights from these assessments enable LEC to identify and focus on mitigation opportunities that deliver the greatest risk reduction.

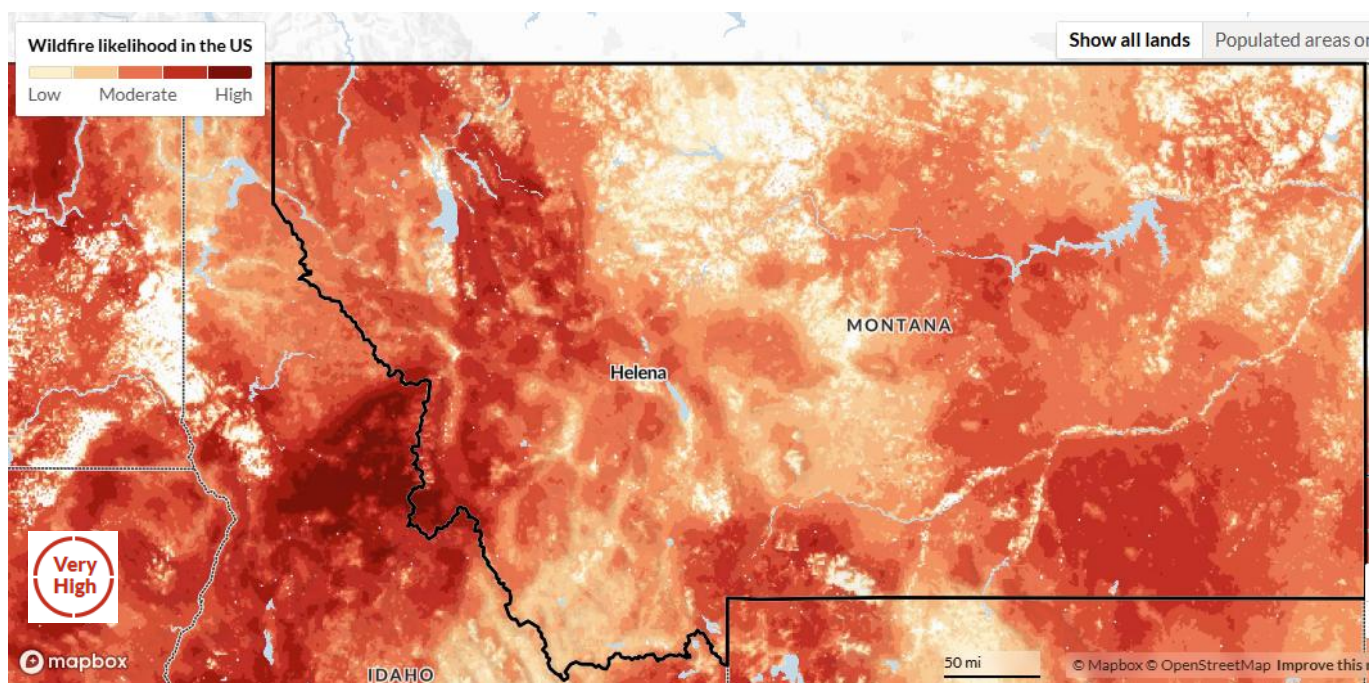


Figure 4 - Montana Wildfire Risk Heat Map

Montana has on average, greater wildfire likelihood than 74% of states in the US.

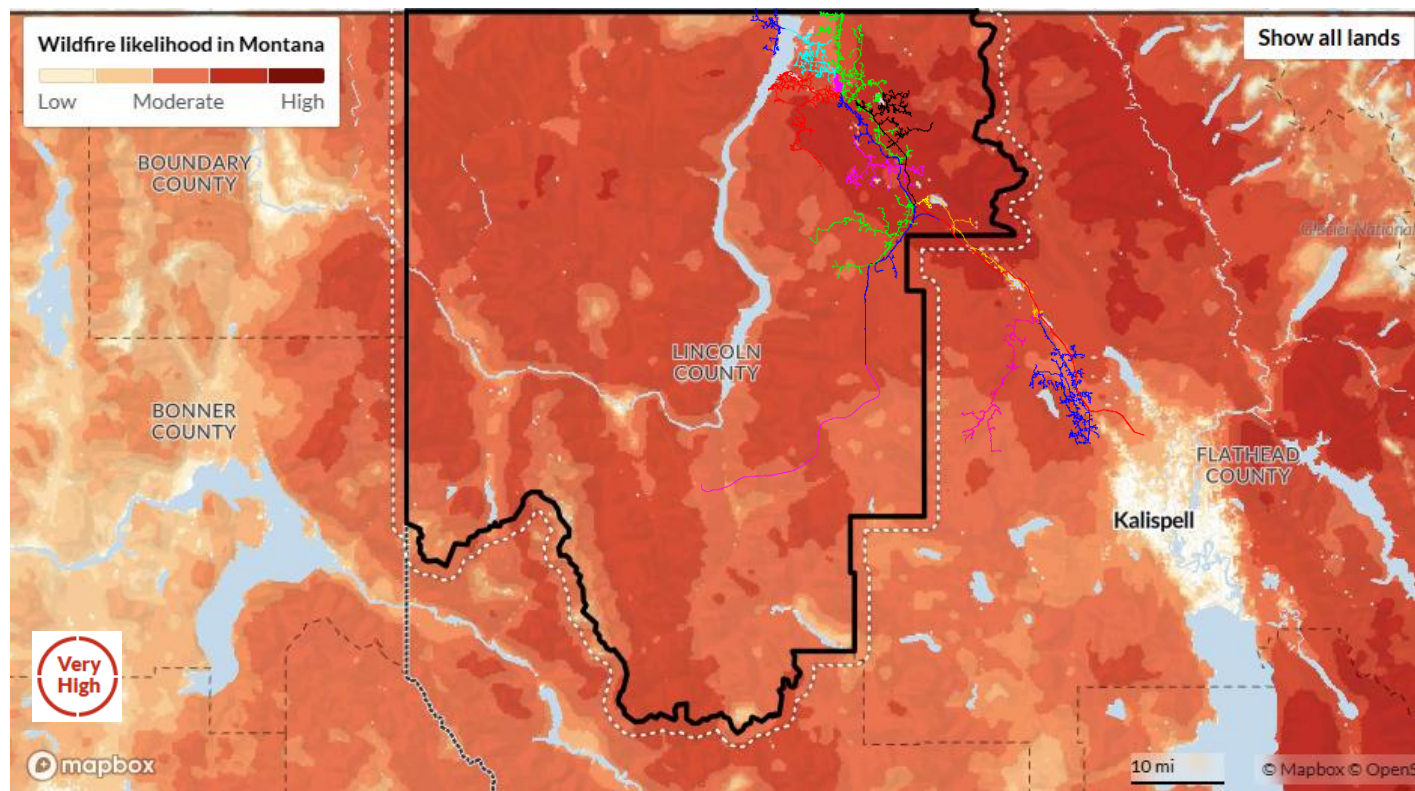


Figure 5 - Lincoln and North Flathead County Risk Heat Map

Lincoln County has, on average, greater wildfire likelihood than 87% of counties in Montana. Flathead County has, on average, greater wildfire likelihood than 82% of counties in Montana.

The dashed white line indicates the risk calculation area (approximately 1.5 miles) offset from the official political boundary.

8.3. Distribution Feeder Risk Analysis

LEC utilized the Cloudfire platform to assess wildfire ignition risk on each feeder of the distribution system. “Cloudfire modeling” refers to the use of cloud-based analytics and simulation tools to assess wildfire ignition risk and fire spread. Figure 6 below shows the wildfire risk threats from the Cloudfire analysis. The green lines without shading indicate underground facilities.

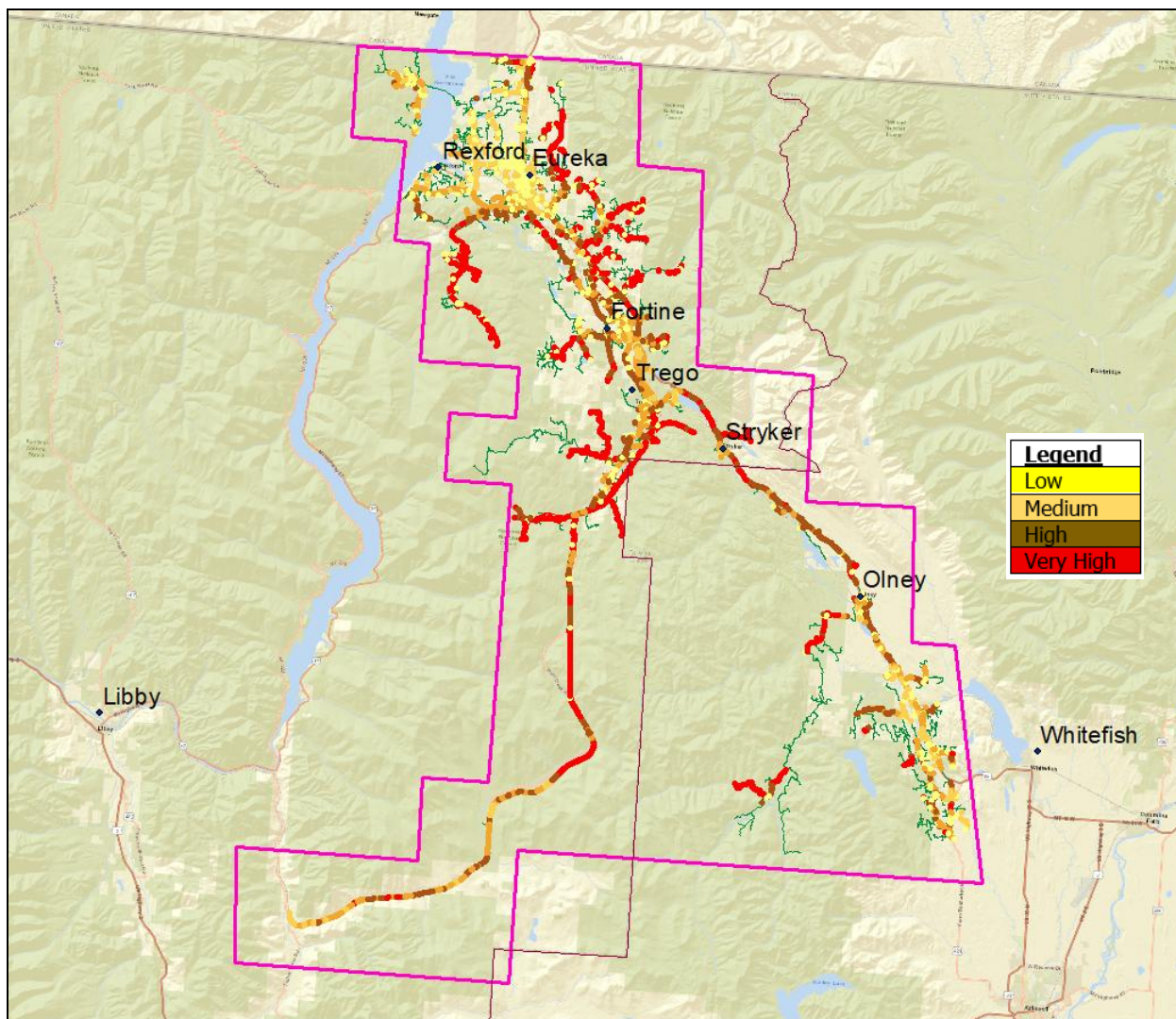


Figure 6 - LEC Feeder Risk Analysis

8.4. Fire Risk Drivers Related to the Service Territory

LEC has identified the following fire risk drivers within the service territory:

- Topography
- Accessibility
- Droughts
- Vegetation types / fuels
- Fire history
- Tree mortality
- Lightning
- Fire Weather

8.5. Key Risk Impacts

Ignitions caused by the risk drivers have many possible outcomes. The list below outlines some of the worst-case scenarios and consequences:

- Personal injuries or fatalities to the public, employees, and contractors
- Damage to public and/or private property
- Damage and loss of LEC-owned infrastructures and assets
- Impacts on reliability and operations
- Damage claims and litigation costs, as well as fines from governing bodies
- Damage to LEC's reputation and loss of public confidence

9. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

LEC and the electric utility industry have consistently recognized that effectively trimming of trees and vegetation close to the power lines is critical for operating a safe and reliable power system.

Utilizing two full-time employees, LEC's entire ROW is cleared and maintained on a seven-year rotation. All overhead three-phase and unfused single-phase power line rights-of-way are patrolled annually. The patrol identifies areas requiring vegetation trimming and clearing, plus facilities requiring maintenance.

In recent years, LEC has worked to identify and remove hazardous trees outside the traditional right-of-way. Hazard trees are dead or diseased trees that can potentially fall on or near power lines creating a wildfire risk. LEC has, and will continue to, work with agency representatives and private landowners to mitigate hazard trees outside of the traditional right-of-way. Figures 7 and 8 on the next page outlines LEC's ROW maintenance distances and hazard tree identification, with proposed expansions presented to the United States Forest Service (USFS) to enhance wildfire mitigation.

LEC will continue to research and utilize equipment and methods to improve ROW management efficiency and effectiveness. This will include considering alternate resources to perform the trimming.

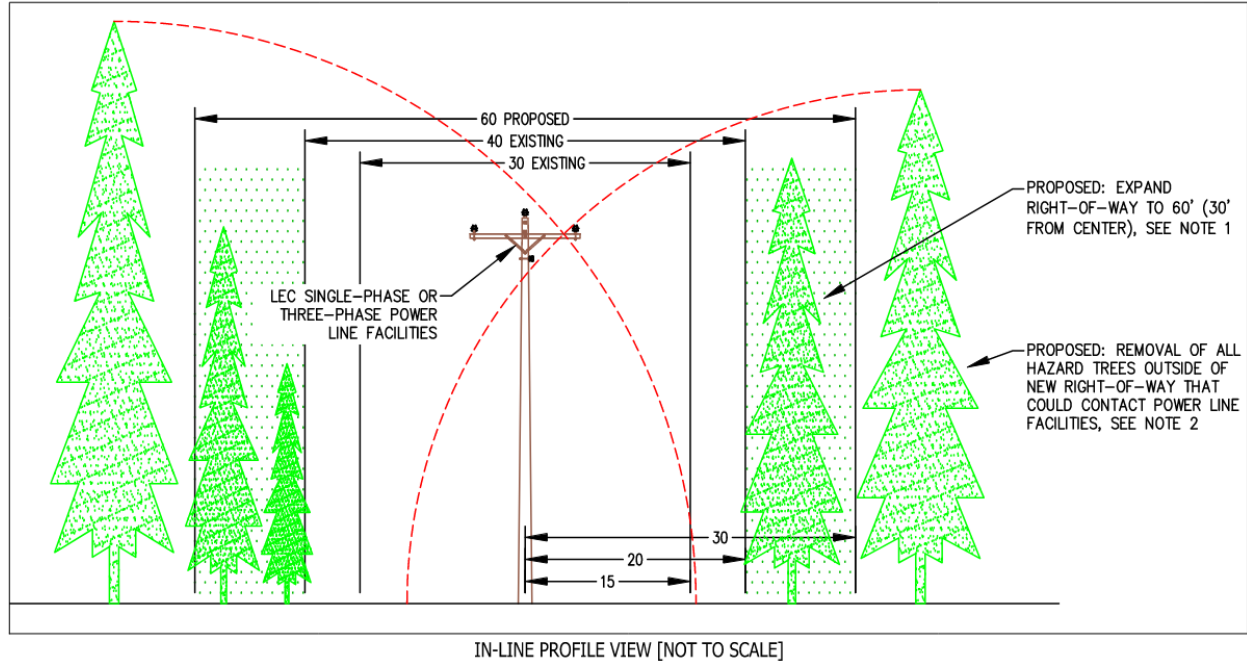


Figure 7 - LEC ROW Distances In-Line View

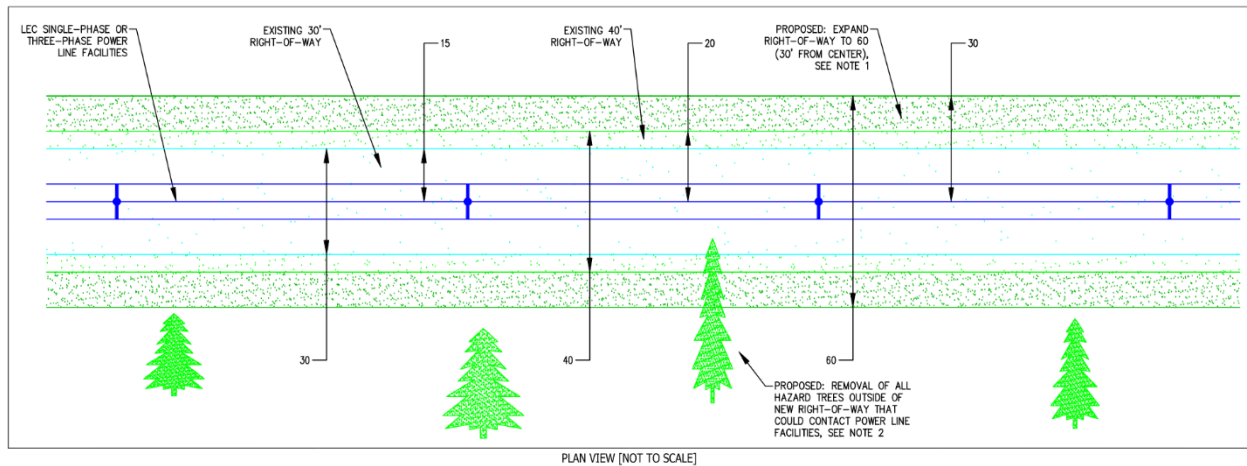


Figure 8 - LEC ROW Distances Plan View

10. SYSTEM PATROL AND INSPECTION

For this WMP, the following definitions will be used for patrol and inspection:

Patrol – an informal examination of power line facilities and rights-of way. Maintenance issues are reported and repaired as work can be scheduled.

Inspection – a formal and detailed assessment of power line facilities and rights-of-way where all examination is documented and recorded. All maintenance issues are reported and repaired as work can be scheduled.

10.1. Line Patrol, Inspect, and Repair

LEC will perform pole inspections on a ten-year rotation, approximately at a rate of ten percent (10%) per year. This will involve detailed inspection, including testing of older poles. Poles identified as failing will be prioritized and included in subsequent work plans for replacement.

All power line facilities and lines will be inspected on a ten-year rotation, approximately ten percent (10%) per year. All maintenance and deficiency issues will be documented for repairs and potential work plan projects.

All ROW vegetation inspection and clearing will be performed on a seven-year rotation, which is approximately fourteen percent (14%) of the distribution system per year. Clearing and vegetation mitigation efforts will be documented.

All three-phase overhead feeder and transmission lines and unfused single-phase overhead lines will be patrolled annually.

The patrols and inspections will be conducted by qualified personnel who possess the knowledge to recognize defects. The patrolman will travel to each structure by vehicle, ATV, or by foot. Drones may be used where appropriate. Defects that are identified will be prioritized and repaired as schedules allow.

10.2. Inspection and Patrol Focus Areas

Vegetation

- Utilize the annual patrol to identify areas needing trimming.
- Record vegetation near overhead lines and any evidence of burning.
- Aim to maintain a thirty-foot (30') clearance around overhead lines, considering potential growth and wind impact over the trim cycle.

Pole Defects

- While not part of the pole inspection program, patrolmen will look for damaged, cracked, or excessively rotted poles.

- Defective poles must be reported and will be scheduled for replacement.

Hardware

- Check for missing, worn, or broken hardware.
- Record any detected defects.
- Inspect for cracked or damaged insulators and cutouts, as well as signs of tracking or burning.
- Document any defects found.

Conductors

- Look for damaged conductors and broken strands.
- Identify excessive splices or baggy conductors that may indicate exposure to severe conditions.
- Attempt to detect bad connections; while not an infrared survey, investigate unusually excessive buzzing.

This patrol ensures the continued safety and reliability of LEC's electric distribution system by proactively addressing potential issues.

10.3. Substation Inspections

LEC inspects each substation on a monthly cycle. Qualified personnel will use prudent care while performing inspections following all required safety rules to protect themselves, other workers, the public, and the system's reliability.

The substation inspection involves a thorough look at the facilities to confirm that there are no structural or mechanical deficiencies, hazards, or tree trimming requirements. Individual pieces of equipment and structures receive careful visual examination and routine diagnostic tests as appropriate.

11. TIMELY REPLACEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Lincoln Electric has always focused on replacing infrastructure as it reaches the end of its useful life. Poles, overhead conductor, underground conductor, transformers, and sectionalizing facilities are key components of a power system and need to be replaced proactively as they near the end of their useful life. As a part of this fire mitigation plan, LEC will identify overhead infrastructures as they reach the end-of-life cycle. These items will be included in future capital item work plans.

12. CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES

As LEC replaces and constructs new infrastructure, the focus on construction practices will be to improve reliability and mitigate wildfire risk. Power line construction will meet

or exceed RUS and NESC standards, which ensures the industry standard of best practice in line clearances, specifications, and safety.

13. OVERHEAD-TO-UNDERGROUND CONVERSION

Converting overhead power lines to underground lines is a highly effective method for mitigating fire risk. In forested areas, it eliminates the risk of trees falling onto overhead conductors.

LEC will prioritize line conversions based on:

- Safety threats to the public
- Threat to personal property and livelihood
- High risk areas as outlined in the risk analysis

14. ENHANCING SYSTEM PROTECTION

LEC utilizes several types of overcurrent and overvoltage equipment to provide safe and reliable service for its membership. The following outlines the status of the equipment and future expectations.

14.1. Breakers and Reclosers

LEC has utilized hydraulic mechanical reclosers on the distribution system for several years. These devices have served LEC well but are limited in terms of wildfire mitigation because of their protection speed and restricted settings. For several years, the Cooperative has routinely replaced these reclosers with vacuum interrupter (VI) type devices with electronic controls. VI equipment provides better reliability and coordination in wildfire scenarios because of the increased reaction speeds and variability which come the electronic controls. Recently, VI vendors have developed controls that sense high resistance faults, meaning they can detect fault situations that hydraulic reclosers could not. LEC will continue to replace hydraulic reclosers with VI devices and explore high resistance fault sensing for future applications. (See Figures 9 and 10)



Figure 9 - Hydraulic Reclosers



Figure 10 - VI Recloser

14.2. Fuses

Fuses, as shown in Figure 11, have been an integral part of overcurrent protection for utilities for many years. Inexpensive and easy to install, they also pose a significant wildfire threat. When in a fault situation the metal core filament begins to melt. Upon final clearing of the fault, the fuse can spray hot molten metal to the bottom of the fuse barrel, creating potential for wildfire.



Figure 11 - Fuse Link

Fuse manufacturers have developed several alternatives for the standard fuse. Energy limiting fuses (ELF) are designed to fit in typical fuse brackets and do not emit sparks or molten metal.

LEC already uses the TripSaver II © (TSII) protective device to replace fuses at strategic locations. This unit is designed to fit in existing fuse brackets to minimize installation time. The TSII utilizes vacuum interrupting design and is fully programable to coordinate with other protective devices. (See Figure 12)



*Figure 12 -
TripSaver II*

Likewise, LEC utilizes SPEAR single-phase reclosers in locations where a fuse could be a potential wildfire threat. Like the VI three-phase reclosers, the SPEAR is a vacuum interrupting device with a control, offering various protection schemes and faster response time. (See Figure 13)

The Cooperative will continue to evaluate new industry equipment and technologies as they emerge. As wildfire threats continue to grow, the new protective devices and sensors being developed may provide better protection and improve the ability to monitor the system.



*Figure 13 - SPEAR
Recloser*

15. SYSTEM HARDENING

Power line system hardening is the process of upgrading physical infrastructure to make it more resilient against severe weather, wildfires, and other external threats, ultimately reducing failures, outages, and risks.

LEC will continue to explore the feasibility of utilizing the following methods to harden the distribution system:

- Strategically replace selected wood poles with steel, ductile iron and fiberglass arms in areas of high risk
- Investigate the use of pole protection wraps or the use of herbicide around poles in high-risk areas
- Strategically convert OVHD to URD
- Utilize non-flammable materials, and insulated wire for new construction and maintenance of OVHD lines

LEC follows a separate Avian Protection Plan which inherently improves system hardening by protecting power line assets from birds.

16. SYSTEM OPERATING PRACTICES

LEC will utilize online weather and vegetation applications, as well as county fire restriction information, to assess the fire risk in the service territory.

RISK FACTOR	MITIGATION ACTIVITY
Fuel Source	• Comprehensive vegetation management program • Enhance vegetation Line Inspections • Enhanced ROW maintenance and clearing specifications • Enhanced inspection intervals and spot checks in high-risk areas • Selective use of non-expulsion fuses • Enhanced tree removal efforts
Extreme Weather	• National weather service monitoring • USFS/WADNR IFPL monitoring • Alternate recloser settings in fire prone areas • Preemptive power shutdown during ongoing wildfires • Emergency preparedness community outreach and education

RISK FACTOR	MITIGATION ACTIVITY
Contact with Foreign Objects	• Increased wildlife guards • Avian Protection construction standards • Insulated equipment • Covered Jumpers • Underground conversion of distribution lines • Hazard tree removal
Equipment Failure	• Routine Maintenance • Design and construction standards to reduce ignition sources • Transmission line detailed inspections and annual patrols • Distribution line routine patrols • De-energizing or alternate settings of lines during certain conditions • Infrared inspections of substation equipment • Wood pole test and treatment program

Table 3 - Activities That Address Wildfire Risk Factors

LEC has many devices on the distribution system that automatically close back after a fault. LEC personnel will group protective devices into three groups. They will consider the number of trees and vegetation in the area that the protective device is covering. The type and condition of the trees/vegetation. The proximity of the lines to populated areas and the potential damage that could occur if a fire were to start. Based on conditions in the area, LEC will block reclosing devices as necessary given the prevailing conditions.

LEC employees who respond and operate the system will adjust their practices based on the fire conditions (see Table 4, next page). When responding to an open protective device due to a system fault, the responder will assess the potential fire conditions. LEC will also adjust where crews can drive, what equipment can be used, and what proactive work will be done during elevated fire risk.

Table 4 corresponds to US Forest Service (USFS) fire danger levels and restrictions. It is important to note that fire levels and restrictions may vary among different USFS districts, so operational practices may vary in the electrical distribution system. More information about USFS fire dangers levels and restrictions can be found at:

Link: [USFS Fire Levels and Restrictions](https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/sanjuan/fire/fire-danger-levels-and-restrictions-explained)

Web address: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/sanjuan/fire/fire-danger-levels-and-restrictions-explained>

System Operating Mode	Normal Conditions	Fire Danger Very High or Extreme	Stage 1 Restrictions	Stage 2 Restrictions	Stage 3 Restrictions
Automatic Reclosing	All automatic reclosing set to normal.	Block reclosers in high-risk and high-consequence areas.	Block reclosing in areas with timber	Block all reclosing in high-risk fire and vegetation areas.	Total forest closure
Outage Response	Test close without patrol is allowed.	Responder uses discretion for patrol needs.	Patrol as much as possible before closing. Consider fire risk in adverse conditions. If minimal, close devices, and schedule daylight patrols if they hold.	Complete system patrol before closing. Pickup in segments in non- reclosing situations.	
Off-Road Travel	Business as usual.	Responder uses good judgement.	Avoid off-road travel; set up poles with caution by trimming grass or wetting the area.	Off road travel is prohibited unless supervisor approved, with fire mitigation steps taken.	
Equipment Needed on Trucks	Standard equipment: shovels, chains, fire extinguisher.	Standard equipment: shovels, chains, fire extinguisher.	Standard equipment plus a 5-gallon backpack water tank filled with water.	Work in off-road, rural or remote areas requires supervisor approval; standard equipment plus an additional water tank, sprayer and fire swatters may be needed.	

Table 4 - System Operating Modes

17. SERVICE RESTORATION PROCESS

After a widespread outage, Lincoln Electric crews will take the following steps before restoring electrical service after a de-energization event. These measures are intended to protect the workers, members, the public, and the system's reliability.

- **Patrol:** Crews patrol de-energized line in non-PSPS outages to ensure no hazards have affected the system during the outage. If an outage is due to wildfire or other natural disasters, as soon as it is deemed safe by the appropriate officials, crews inspect lines and equipment for damage, foreign contacts, and estimate equipment needed for repair and restoration. Lines located in remote and rugged terrain with limited access may require additional time for inspection. LEC's personnel assist in clearing downed trees and limbs as needed.
- **Isolate:** Isolate the outage and restore power to areas not affected.
- **Repair:** After the initial assessment, LEC's staff will meet to plan the work needed. Rebuilding commences as soon as the affected areas become safe. Repair plans prioritize substations and transmission facilities, then distribution circuits serving the most critical infrastructure needs. While the goal is to reenergize all areas as soon as possible, emergency services, medical facilities, and utilities receive first consideration when resources are limited. Additional crew and equipment are dispatched as necessary.
- **Restore:** Periodic member and media updates of restoration status before full restoration are posted on social media platforms and LEC's website. After repairs are made, power is restored to homes and businesses as quickly as possible. Members, local news, and other agencies receive notification of restored electric service.

18. SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Situational assessment is the process by which current operating conditions are determined. Situational Awareness is the understanding of the working environment, which creates a foundation for successful decision making and the ability to predict how it might change due to various factors.

LEC's staff rely on various resources to monitor evolving fire weather and climatological conditions that may lead to fire events. Sources for weather information include, but are not limited to the following:

- **USFS-Wildland Fire Assessment System (WFAS):** For immediate and short-term situational awareness, mapping tools from the USFS-WFAS help determine daily and short-term forecasted risks, with daily or weekly fire weather status maps produced as needed to assess PNW wildfire conditions. ([WFAS](#))

- **The National Weather Service (NWS):** The NWS provides online predictive fire weather forecasting tools in the form of a current fire-weather outlook, two day, and a three to eight day outlook. ([NWS](#))
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather and Hazards Data Viewer:** This online map provides historic or real-time surface observations including wind speed and direction, wind gust, dew point, relative humidity, and sea level pressure collected from remote automated weather stations (RAWS). Extreme-weather alerts such as fire weather watch, high wind watch, and red flag warning are provided from this resource. ([NOAA](#))

19. SYSTEM MONITORING

New system monitoring technologies are emerging with the rise of wildfire risk. LEC will continue to evaluate new devices and systems to determine the feasibility and practicality as related to wildfire risk.

20. DE-ENERGIZATION – PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFF

A Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) preemptively de-energizes power lines during high wind events combined with hot and dry weather conditions. When considering de-energization, LEC examines the impacts on fire response, water supply, public safety, and emergency communications.

LEC considers the external risks and potential consequences of de-energization while striving to meet its main priority of protecting the communities and members it serves. They include:

- Potential loss of water supply to fight wildfires due to loss of production wells and pumping facilities.
- Negative impacts to emergency response and public safety due to disruptions to the internet and mobile phone service during periods of extended power outages.
- Loss of key community infrastructure and operational efficiency that occurs during power outages.
- Medical emergencies for members of the community requiring powered medical equipment or refrigerated medication. Additionally, the lack of air conditioning can negatively impact medically vulnerable populations.
- Negative impacts on medical facilities.
- Traffic congestion resulting from the public evacuation in de-energized areas can lengthen response times for emergency responders.
- Negative economic impacts from local businesses are forced to close during an outage.

- The inability to operate garage doors or motorized gates during a wildfire event can lead to injuries and fatalities.

The risks and potential consequences of initiating a PSPS are significant and extremely complex. Based on the above considerations, LEC reserves the option of implementing a PSPS when conditions dictate. While LEC believes the risks of implementing a PSPS far outweigh the chances of its electric overhead distribution system igniting a catastrophic wildfire, the PSPS provides a last resort tool and another mitigation option in a potential crisis.

On a case-by-case basis, LEC will consider de-energizing a portion of its system in response to a known public safety issue or response to a request from an outside emergency management/response agency. Any de-energizing of the lines is performed in coordination with key local partner agencies; however, the final determination is made by LEC.

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) plan that may temporarily impact service to LEC and its members.

21. MEMBER COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

LEC has developed a comprehensive, multi-level strategy to educate members about fire threats, prevention measures, and emergency preparedness. Below are the key components of this approach:

- **Educational Advertising Campaigns:** These focus on LEC's preparation for the fire season and guide members on how to prepare for fire and weather related emergencies.
- **LEC Member Newsletter:** LEC's newsletter, published in the Rural Montana magazine, shares educational information.
- **Website Resources:** The LEC website will feature a dedicated page for the Wildfire Mitigation Plan, providing valuable wildfire information, helpful resources, downloadable Fire Safe guides, and relevant links.
- **Outage Updates:** Current system outage status is shared via LEC's social media accounts, as well as the company website.
- **Educational Events:** Public participation meetings, and utilization of a safety training trailer.

When an active wildfire is within the service territory, LEC will proactively keep members informed about potential fire damage to LEC's infrastructure, power outages, and estimated restoration times. LEC may also guide members to the fire command and emergency services for updates regarding possible evacuations when available.

In critical situations, such as during a potential public safety power shutoff, LEC will notify members promptly about the outage and provide ongoing updates about restoration timelines. LEC considers the impact on the members when assessing the wildfire threat.

22. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

22.1. Staff Roles

All communication will be authorized by the General Manager, Operations Superintendent, and/or Engineering Manager. Any incoming information will be given to the General Manager, unless another representative is designated as the lead employee. They will then delegate with the communications lead for messaging options based on the location of the incident and what it is. (This could be with Local fire departments, USFS, DNRC, County, City, etc.) Direct communications with local Fire Departments will be coordinated by the General Manager or communications lead. If daily incident meetings are available by the fire department, LEC will dedicate one employee to be the point of contact for these meetings, as well as to be present at meetings.

22.2. Points of Contact

Matt Quinn, General Manager
Stan Williams, Operations Superintendent
Jamie Stark, Engineering Manager
Jacob DeLong, Communications and Special Projects Manager

22.3. Primary Coordination Point

LEC Office
312 Osloski Road
Eureka, MT 59917

23. PLAN ACCOUNTABILITY

Personnel responsibility for plan implementation and general communications is described below:

- The Board of Trustees makes policy decisions relative to the utility – they will be responsible for the initial review, approval, and adoption of the WMP.
- The General Manager directs management staff responsible for operations, member service, and finance.
- The General Manager and Engineering Manager are responsible for the overall execution of the WMP. Staff will be directed as to their roles and responsibilities in support of the plan.
- The Operations Superintendent supervises the Operations Department for the day-to-day operation, maintenance, and construction of the plant.
- The Communications Specialist is responsible for communicating with public safety, media outlets, public agencies, first responders, local Office of Emergency Management, and health agencies during emergency or planned maintenance outages.
- The General Manager determines when and how to notify outside agencies in cases of wildfire emergency events.
- The Engineering Manager, in conjunction with senior staff members, will be responsible for monitoring and auditing the WMP to confirm that the objectives of the WMP are met, as well as the implementation of the plan in general.

24. MONITORING AND AUDITING OF THE WMP

The WMP will be reviewed annually for the purpose of updating the plan as needed to reflect knowledge gained in the preceding year and modified accordingly.

The General Manager will be responsible for ensuring that WMP meets all public agency guidelines to mitigate the risk of its assets becoming the source or contributing factor of a wildfire. Staff responsible for assigned mitigation areas have the role of vetting current procedures and recommending changes or enhancements to build upon the strategies in the WMP. Either due to unforeseen circumstances, regulatory changes, emerging technologies, or other rationales, deficiencies within the WMP will be sought out and reported to the Board of Trustees in the form of an updated WMP on a yearly basis.

The General Manager, or their designated representative, will be responsible for spearheading discussions on addressing any plan deficiencies and collaborating on solutions when updating the WMP. At any point in time when deficiencies are identified, the Supervisors or their delegates are responsible for making the appropriate policy adjustments. LEC's staff and qualified stakeholders are encouraged to bring any potential deficiencies to the attention of the General Manager. The General Manager,

along with the appropriate staff, will evaluate each reported deficiency, and if determined to be valid, shall record the deficiency for further action.

25. PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

An electric cooperative must present incremental costs associated with implementing a wildfire mitigation plan to its APPROVAL AUTHORITY for consideration when reviewing the plan; HOWEVER, those costs may not be a part of the wildfire mitigation plan itself (HB490).

Lincoln Electric will make all efforts to consider stakeholder input in the preparation of its Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Local fire safe councils, The Montana DES, as well as federal, state, tribal, and local agencies, are encouraged to review and provide input during the required 30-day comment period. The DES shall review the plan within the comment period and provide comments and recommendations regarding aspects of the plan within each of their jurisdictions.

After a public meeting, and no more than 60 days after the closing of the comment period, the Board of Trustees will review and approve the plan or identify and provide in writing any deficiencies in the plan.

Lincoln Electric, in accordance with HB490, will submit to its Board of Trustees an updated plan every three years. Associated incremental costs associated with implementing the WMP will also be presented for consideration when reviewing the plan. No later than June 1 of each year, LEC shall submit to the Board of Trustees a report summarizing the wildfire mitigation efforts and compliance with its currently authorized WMP.

The approval authority shall approve the wildfire mitigation plan if the approval authority determines the wildfire mitigation plan contains the required components in subsection (2), is in the public interest, and reasonably balances the incremental costs of implementing the plan with the risk of a potential wildfire (HB490).

26. WILDFIRE RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Organization	County	Office Phone
Eureka Rural Volunteer Fire Department	Lincoln	406-297-9083
Lincoln County Emergency Management	Lincoln	406-293-6295
Trego Fortine Stryker Volunteer Fire Department	Lincoln	406-882-4810
USFS - Rexford/Fortine Ranger District	Lincoln	406-296-2536
West Kootenai Volunteer Fire Department	Lincoln	406-955-9090
Bonneville Power Administration	Flathead/Lincoln	406-751-7800
Bonneville Power Administration - Munro Dispatch	Flathead/Lincoln	509-465-1820
DNRC - Stillwater Unit Office	Flathead/Lincoln	406-881-2371
USFS - Kootenai National Forest	Flathead/Lincoln	406-293-6211
City of Whitefish Fire Department	Flathead	406-863-2483
Libby Volunteer Fire Department	Flathead	406-293-9217
Olney Fire Department	Flathead	406-407-2996
USFS - Talley Lake Ranger District	Flathead	406-758-5208

Table 5 - Wildfire Response Contacts

For privacy purposes, LEC maintains a separate detailed list of contacts not listed within this document.

27. LEC CONTACT INFORMATION

Headquarters:

Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.
PO Box 628
312 Osloski Road
Eureka, MT 59917

Phone: (406) 889-3301
Fax: (406) 889-3874
Website: www.LincolnElectric.coop

General Manager: GeneralManager@LincolnElectric.coop
Engineering Manager: EngineeringManager@LincolnElectric.coop

Like and follow LEC on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/lincolnelectriccooperative/>

28. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this WMP sums up processes and practices that LEC has been doing to reduce the chance of wildfire, with proactive steps for the future. This is well summarized by LEC's General Manager Matt Quinn in a written response to the local newspaper:

This past legislative session, the MT legislature passed HB490 that requires all electric utilities in Montana to develop a Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Part of that law is for the utilities to allow for a public comment period so that interested community members as well as Federal, State, and local agencies have a chance to view what the utility looks to do to limit the potential for wildfires caused by the electric lines.

Lincoln Electric Cooperative has historically taken steps to minimize the risk of wildfires. Those steps include regular patrolling of our lines looking for visible hardware issues, reducing vegetation in our rights of way that may interfere with the power lines, working with landowners adjacent to our lines to clear danger trees, burying of electric lines as we are able, assessing potential risks to our lines due to historic fire activity and future potential of wildfires, pole testing to measure the health of our power poles, and designing our system to enhance overcurrent protection. These are all good practices that LEC has historically done; HB490 requires us to put these practices into a single document.

29. REVISIONS

October 20, 2025	WMP approved by LEC Board of Trustees.

30. APPENDIX A: DISCLAIMERS

30.1. WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN DISCLAIMER

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31. APPENDIX B: HB-0490 REFERENCE TABLE

HB-0490 Section	Guidelines Regarding Wildfire Mitigation Plans	Plan Section Number
2 (1)	An electric facilities provider shall prepare a wildfire mitigation plan in accordance with this section and submit the plan to its approval authority and commence implementation of its wildfire mitigation plan no later than December 31, 2025. An electric facilities provider shall resubmit an updated or subsequent wildfire mitigation plan to its approval authority at least every 3 years.	25
2 (2)	A wildfire Plan must include a description of:	
2 (2) (a)	Areas in which the electric facilities provider has electric facilities or electric transmission and distribution activities that may be subject to heightened risk of wildfire;	8.3
2 (2) (b)	The strategies and programs that the electric facilities provider will use to inspect and operate its electric facilities;	10
2 (2) (c)	The strategies and programs that the electric facilities provider will use to perform vegetation management;	9
2 (2) (d)	The strategies for modifications or upgrades to electric facilities and preventative programs that the electric facilities provider may employ to reduce the risk of its electric facilities igniting a wildfire;	15
2 (2) (e)	The strategies and methods for de-energizing power lines and modifying electric facility operations to mitigate potential wildfires taking into consideration the ability of the electric facilities provider to reasonably access the proposed electric facility to be de-energized, the balance of the risk of wildfire with the need for continued supply of electricity to a community, and any potential impact to public safety, first responders, and health and communications infrastructure;	20
2 (2) (f)	The methods the electric facilities provider intends to use to restore its electrical system in the event systems are de-energized for the prevention of a wildfire;	17
2 (2) (g)	The estimated incremental costs associated with implementing the plan, including system improvements and upgrades for a regulated utility;	25
2 (2) (h)	Community outreach and public awareness efforts before and during a wildfire season; and	22
2 (2) (i)	Potential participation, if applicable, with state or local wildland fire protection plans or wildfire mitigation plans.	26