



Media Release

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OREGON PUC ADOPTS NEW RULES FOR 2021 WILDFIRE SEASON **Rules address public safety power shutoffs and utility reporting requirements**

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved temporary rules for use during the 2021 wildfire season on public safety power shutoffs (PSPSs) and fire-related reporting requirements for investor-owned electric utilities, including Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, and Idaho Power. These rules provide near-term guidance for utilities to enhance the safety of Oregonians as more expansive permanent rules are further developed.

During Oregon’s historic 2020 wildfire season, nearly one million acres burned across the state and Portland General Electric implemented their first PSPS. A PSPS is a measure of last resort, designed to help keep people and communities in high fire-risk areas safe by proactively shutting off electricity during extreme and dangerous weather conditions when energized electrical lines could be damaged and ignite a fast-moving wildfire. In these rules, the PUC has set out expectations utilities must meet when utilizing a PSPS. Implementing a PSPS is a complex decision that impacts communities, including use of home medical devices, access to 911 services, and the ability to pump water.

“With the earliest official opening to Oregon’s wildfire season in 40 years, the establishment of these rules was extremely important and timely,” said Letha Tawney, PUC Commissioner. “They are designed to help keep Oregonians safe by establishing criteria on how the utilities communicate about and coordinate during a PSPS, and particularly how they issue notifications before, during, and after a potential PSPS in order to provide the PUC, public safety partners, and the general public useful and timely information.”

These temporary rules will remain in effect through mid-November 2021. The PUC will continue working with the utilities, public safety partners, and the communities to develop permanent rules to further enhance public safety as the electrical system adapts to extreme wildfire risk.

“We look forward to the continued work on this critical issue and we encourage the public to stay informed on this process as permanent rules are established,” added Commissioner Tawney.

For information on how to be prepared for this year’s fire season, including public safety power shutoffs and other long-duration outages, visit <https://www.oregon.gov/puc/safety/Pages/Power-Outage-Prep.aspx>.

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The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulates customer rates and services of the state’s investor-owned electric, natural gas and telephone utilities, as well as select water companies. The PUC mission is to ensure Oregon utility customers have access to safe, reliable, and high quality utility services at just and reasonable rates, which is accomplished through thorough analysis and independent decision-making conducted in an open and fair process.