



City Council Agenda Item

City Council Meeting Date: June 15, 2021

TO: Jim Throop, City Manager

FROM: Charles J. Berry, Utility Director
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SUBJECT: City of Lompoc Wildfire Mitigation Plan Update Report

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council receive this Wildfire Mitigation Plan Update Report for informational purposes only.

Background:

On September 21, 2018, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 901 (SB 901). A section of the bill, amending Public Utilities Code (PUC) section 8387(b), directed California's electric utilities to develop wildfire mitigation plans related to power lines and equipment in areas of increased risk for utility-associated wildfires. Additionally, public electric utilities such as Lompoc Electric must annually prepare a wildfire mitigation plan; receive an independent review to assess compliance and ensure it complies with all applicable rules, regulations, and standards; and present it to their governing body at a noticed public meeting for comment.

Lompoc Electric identified that less than 2% of its utility's infrastructure is located in and adjacent to the California Public Utilities Commission designated Tier 2 High Fire Threat District. The area is considered an "Elevated" level of risk for wildfire threat. No service area is located in a Tier 3 area of "Extreme" level of risk. Lompoc Electric has determined that the level of risk for starting wildfires from its overhead lines and equipment is limited. Despite the lower risk, Lompoc Electric will continue to take appropriate actions annually to help the City prevent and respond to the increasing risk of wildfires from its electric utility infrastructure.

To comply with SB 901 and to meet the requirements outlined in PUC section 8387(b)(2), Lompoc Electric developed a Wildfire Mitigation Plan (Plan) (attached). The Plan was adopted by the City Council on December 17, 2019.

Additionally, PUC section 8387(c) required that a qualified independent evaluator review and assess the comprehensiveness of the Plan. Guidehouse was hired to do the review

and assessment and found the Plan to be in accordance with PUC section 8387. Guidehouse provided its report at a City Council meeting held July 21, 2020.

Discussion:

PUC section 8387(b)(2) requires the Plan be presented to its governing board by July 1 of each year. Adoption of the annual plan update is not required. A comprehensive revision of the Plan is required at least once every three years.

Staff used two metrics to measure the performance of the Plan as required by Section 8 of the Plan: (1) number of fire ignitions; and (2) wires down. No fires ignitions or wires were downed in the HFTD or in the utility service area.

Staff evaluated the Plan and determined that a comprehensive revision to the Plan was not required for 2021. No wildfires were started by electric equipment or overhead lines. Plan implementation was successful in 2020. Plan accomplishments are as follows:

Lompoc Electric did complete all of the system hardening projects found in Section 5(F) of the Plan as described below and will continue to evaluate other technologies:

- Replacement of all high voltage mechanical electrical connections with compression connections to minimize the possibility of high resistance/arcing due to loosening of connection over lifespan;
- Installation of non-expulsion type current limiting fuses to minimize the risk of wildfire due to hot fuse material expelled onto vegetation;
- Upgrade existing primary insulators to material with higher dielectric rating (over insulating);
- Visually inspect and tighten all hardware and replace existing hardware bonding components where needed;
- Install insulated wildlife protective guards on all exposed high voltage wires and apparatus on utility poles; and
- Increase inspection cycle for infrastructure located within high fire risk area.

Lompoc Electric did contract with a qualified independent evaluator to review and assess the comprehensiveness of the Plan as required in Section 9 of the Plan. The report and findings were presented to the City Council at a public meeting on July 21, 2020. The independent evaluator determined that the Plan is in compliance with PUC section 8387. No recommendations were made for improvements to the Plan.

Lompoc Electric completed vegetation and pole inspections in accordance with the Plan and will continue enhancements to traditional vegetation management strategy and enhanced inspection strategy as noted in Section 5(A) and 5(B) of the Plan.

Conclusion:

Distribution system protection for both public and asset safety has been paramount. Lompoc Electric has been successful in preventing wildfires from its infrastructure and has not had a wildfire start from its electrical lines or equipment. The implementation of the Plan and annual review will continue to help Lompoc Electric continue its successful practice of preventing wildfires from its electrical lines and equipment.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles J. Berry, Utility Director

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:

Jim Throop, City Manager

Attachment: 2021 Wildfire Mitigation Plan