



# **BKI: WMP BACKGROUNDER**

## **Wildfire Regulations in California:**

**Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMPs)** - Due to the escalation of devastating wildfires in California, the legislature acted to pass SB 901 on September 21, 2018. This bill established requirements and unfunded mandates upon all California Consumer-Owned Utilities (COUs) to develop operational policies and practices to prevent, prepare for and respond to wildfire events. The California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) that resulted from the passage of SB 901 (PUC § 8387) required all COUs to establish and adopt a Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) before January 1, 2020 and renew it annually.

On October 30, 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced the appointment of members of the California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board, as outlined in AB 1054 (passed in July of 2019).

**California Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (WSAB)** - The California WSAB advises the Wildfire Safety Division within the California Public Utilities Commission on wildfire safety and mitigation performance, including plans written by utilities. The WSAB is responsible for establishing an appropriate scope and process for assessing the safety culture of each electric utility. They are also tasked with providing direction to utilities for ongoing improvements to WMPs.

The six-member Advisory Board meets at least quarterly and evaluates all California WMPs that must be submitted to the group by California utilities.

## **WMPs in Utility Planning:**

**Western State Regulations** - While California is on the burning edge of preparing wildfire policies, other states are rapidly working to establish similar legislation and regulations. Neighboring western states may not establish the same WMP requirements as California, but it is good to start developing and implementing wildfire risk mitigation and assessment plans now to minimize risk and reduce liabilities.

**WMP Planning** - Moving forward, utilities should plan to incorporate wildfire mitigation strategies, system upgrades and related costs into their planning (strategic plans, long-range plans, system coordination, construction standards, budgets, etc...). Utilities don't need to consider this a forced requirement or burden, as they have the flexibility to proactively elect to implement logical and reasonable mitigation measures on their systems on a time-line that works for the individual utility.

Proactive work may be best focused on vegetation management, hardening, coordination and standards. Accordingly, these plans rely heavily on engineering and operations to provide much of the needed content, strategies and over-all system planning.

## Key Elements of California WMP:

Since state requirements and utility systems will differ, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to WMPs. State regulations are evolving, and each utility has unique challenges. Below is an overview of the minimum standards required in WMPs to meet CPUC § 8387. This is being provided as a reference tool for utilities seeking to prevent, combat and respond to threats to their systems. **Note:** Exceeding code requirements to prevent wildfires can be cost-effective and an appropriate methodology for protecting your community.

### California WMP's Include:

- Objectives of the plan
  - Provide a comprehensive plan to minimize risk of damage to and from electrical lines and equipment
  - Reduce, if not eliminate, utility sourced ignitions over time to increase reliability and safety
- Description of service territory conditions and preventive strategy
  - Identify assets within high fire threat areas (Wildfire Risk Maps)
  - Inspect and maintain critical assets (see O&M programs below)
- Risk analysis and risk drivers
  - Assess geographic, climate and safety risks - enterprise risk management
  - Evaluate equipment failure, pole contact, wire-to-wire contact, etc...
- Wildfire prevention strategy and programs



- Emergency preparedness and response
  - Engage community and involve in emergency strategy
  - Standardize Emergency Management System (SEMS)
- Performance metrics and monitoring
  - Assign responsibilities to catalog, capture and assess strategies
  - Review/track/report annually
- Additional information as required by state and local jurisdictions
- Review by a qualified independent evaluator
- Annual review and refinement
  - Bolster successful programs
  - Modify or eliminate ineffective programs

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