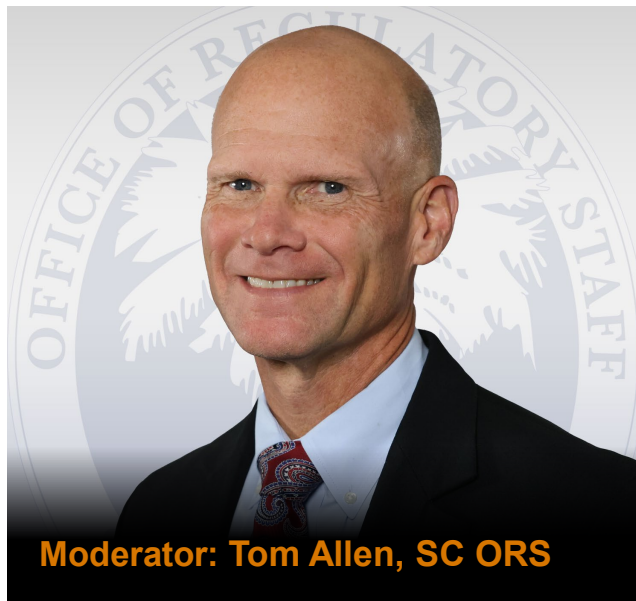
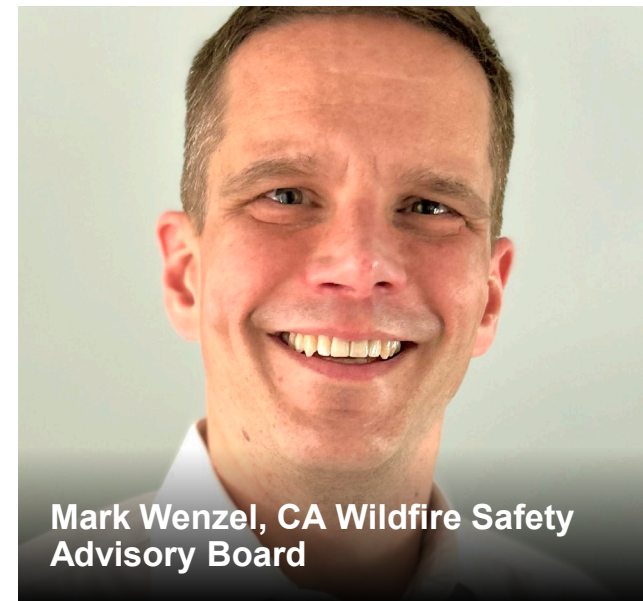


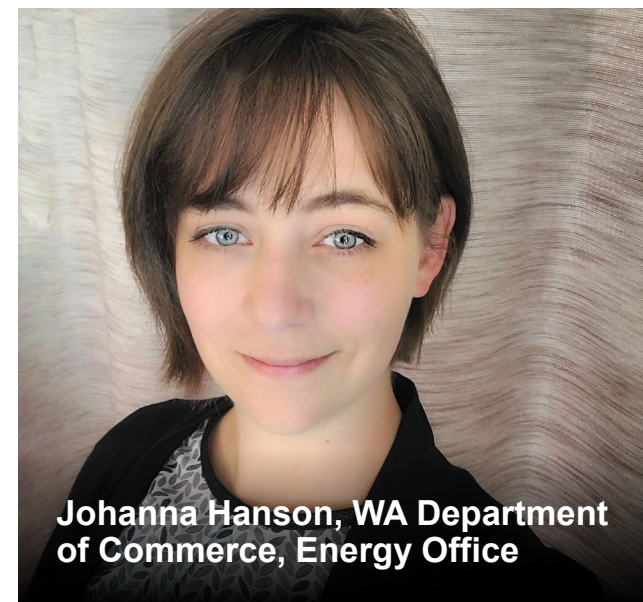
Western States and Wildfire



Moderator: Tom Allen, SC ORS



**Mark Wenzel, CA Wildfire Safety
Advisory Board**

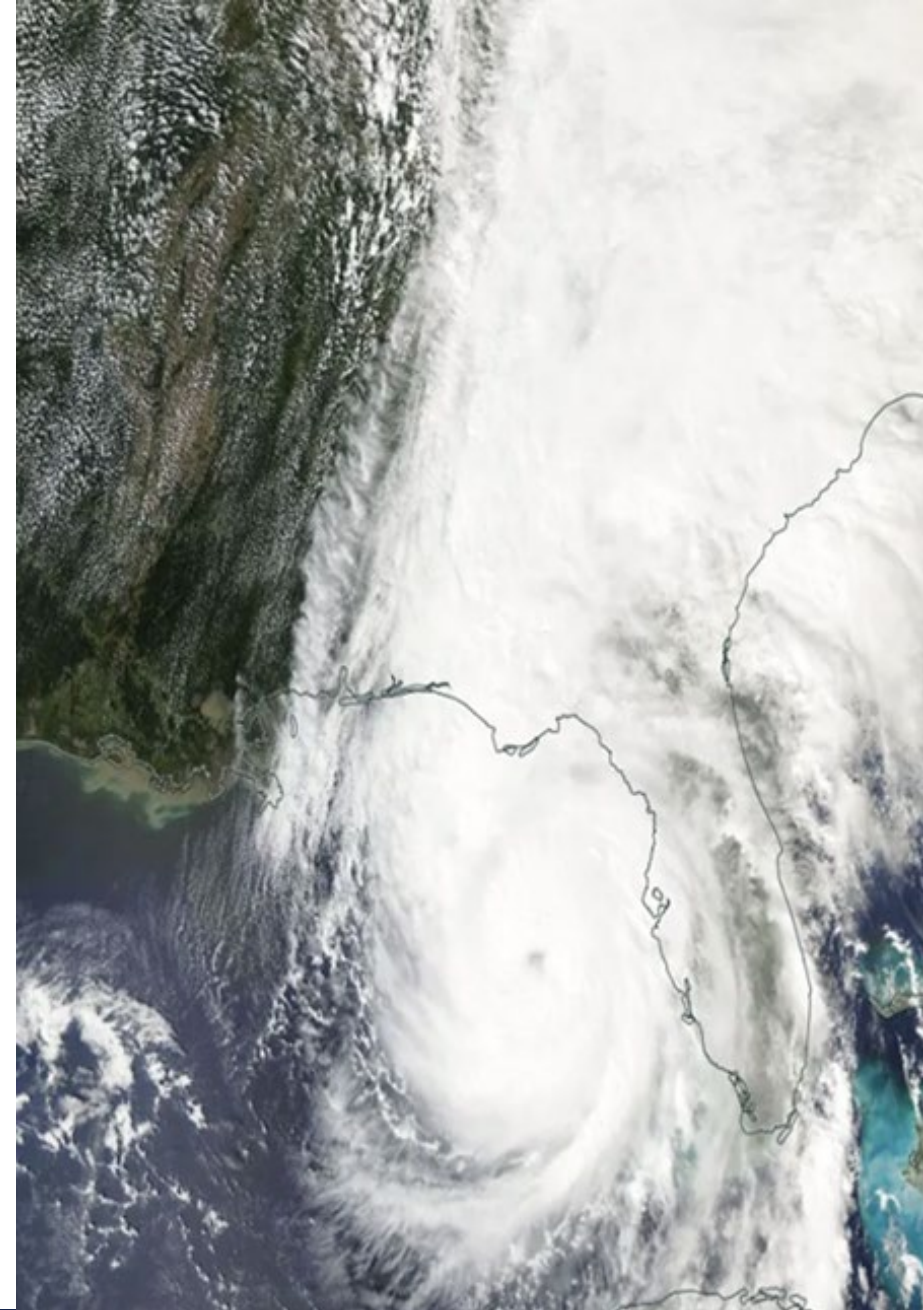


**Johanna Hanson, WA Department
of Commerce, Energy Office**

Hurricane Helene

- SC is small state and prone to small wildfires
- Population growth=wildland/urban interface.
- Annually, SCEMD, SERT and ESFs held wildfire response TTX (1 hour, only Forestry and ESF 4/9 seriously engaged)

Hurricane Helene (Sept. 2024) significantly increased the wildfire risk in South Carolina throughout **2025**, primarily due to the massive amount of **timber debris** it left behind. It created a dangerous "fuel load" that began to dry out and pose a threat the following spring and fall.



Hurricane Helene

1. The "Fuel Load" Problem

- **Fuel Accumulation:** Millions of tons of pine and hardwood created blankets of debris and "dead-of-winter" drying period
- **Intensity:** Wildfires were much hotter and are more difficult for firefighters to plow due to debris thickness

2. Wildfire Activity in 2025

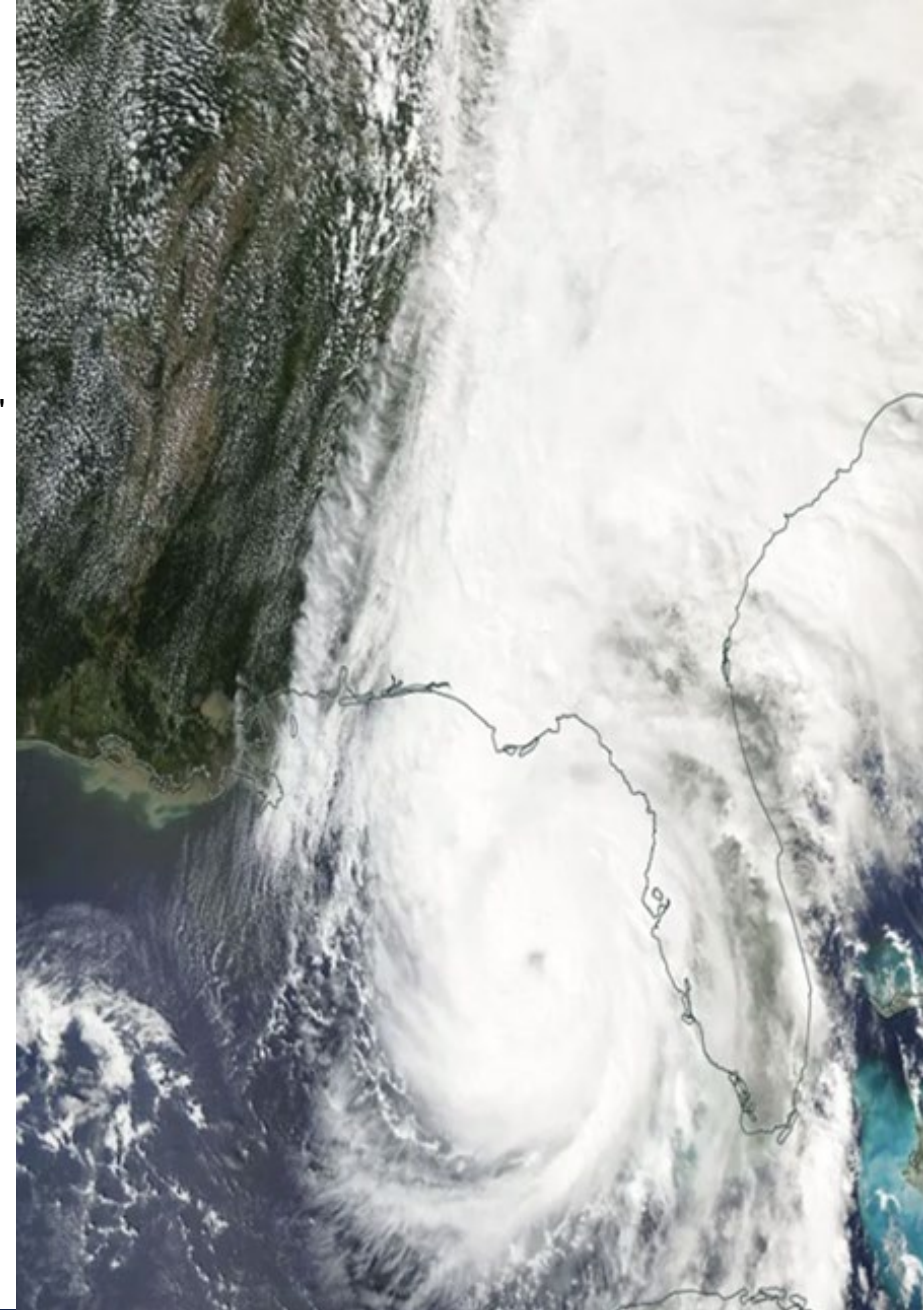
- **Access Issues:** Fallen trees from Helene blocked many logging roads and firebreaks,

3. Impact on Prescribed Burns

- Helene "led" to wildfire risk by **disrupting prescribed burning**.

Very strenuous 2025 Spring Fire Season

This long-term risk was one of the primary reasons why the **2026 SCEMD Full-Scale Exercise** focused on a statewide wildfire scenario—emergency managers recognized that the debris from Helene would remain a threat for years to come.



State Objectives

- Interagency Coordination
- Resource Deployment
- P.A.C.E. Communication Plan
- Operational Decision-Making

ESF 12 Objectives

- **Grid Resiliency:** 1) evaluate damage to high-voltage transmission lines and natural gas/petroleum pipelines located in impacted areas and 2) create maps of overlaid energy infrastructure and fires to determine mitigation actions needed to be taken by the utilities.
- **Utility Coordination:** coordinate with stakeholders to 1) practice emergency power restoration in active fire zones, 2) common messaging between utilities and the state and 3) emergency locate requests (SC811).



The exercise simulated multiple, simultaneous large-scale wildfires across several counties. This scenario was chosen to test the state's readiness for "cascading" disasters—events where traditional response resources (like local fire departments) are quickly overwhelmed, requiring rapid state and federal intervention.

50 state and federal agencies and all 46 counties



The **2026 SCEMD Full-Scale Exercise** served as the first formal "stress test" for these wildfire-specific energy protocols. Key findings from that exercise included:

1. Operational

- The need for **dual-fuel capabilities** at critical compressor stations to ensure natural gas flow isn't interrupted if the electrical grid is cut due to fire.
- The success of **expedited utility access** to state-owned forest lands for immediate hazard tree removal.
- Coordination with **SC 811**

2. Integrated GIS Mapping (The "Common Operating Picture")

- **Layered Visualization:** Palmetto EOC overlays real-time fire perimeters onto utility infrastructure maps.
- **Proactive Alerting:** If a fire perimeter comes within a specified distance of facilities, the system triggers an alert

3. PSPS Protocols

- **Pre-event Notification:** Utilities must provide a **24-to-48-hour notice** if they anticipate a proactive power shutoff
- **Approval Flow:** ESF 12 communicates these shutoffs to **ESF 15 (Public Information)** and to **ESF 6 (Mass Care)**

4. P.A.C.E. Communication Redundancy

- **Primary:** Cell Phone
- **Alternate:** Digital radios (800 MHz Palmetto 800 system)
- **Contingent:** Satellite phones and mobile Starlink terminals for remote "dead zones."
- **Emergency:** **SCHEART** (Amateur Radio)

5. Post-Event "Joint Damage Assessment"

- State and the utility are seeing the same data

Incorporating wildfire into SOP and Planning documents

ESF 12 doesn't "fight" the fire, but its SOPs are designed to protect the grid and maintain fuel supplies when a wildfire (managed by ESF 4/9) threatens critical energy infrastructure.

ESF 12 incorporates wildfire contingencies into its **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**, but it does so primarily through a "cascading impact" framework in coordination with **ESF 4/9(Firefighting and SAR)**.

Specific Wildfire Inclusions in the ESF 12 SOP:

- **Infrastructure Prioritization:** ESF 12 maintains a Critical Infrastructure List.
- **Fuel Supply Chain Security:** ESF 12's **Petroleum SOP** includes rerouting protocols.
- **Right-of-Way (ROW) Management:** ESF 12 monitors utility vegetation management programs.
- ESF 12 uses a shared **Common Operating Picture** with ESF 4/9 allowing real-time fire perimeters overlaid with the state's power grid map.

State Energy Security Plan

- incorporated as an Appendix to ESF 12 SOP
- SESP addresses wildfire response through a framework of **infrastructure hardening, interagency coordination, and fuel supply resiliency.**
- Additional Considerations found or to be added





1. **Hardening Energy Infrastructure**
 - **Vegetation Management (ROW)**
 - **Infrastructure Prioritization**
 - **Expedited Repairs**

2. Operational Coordination

- **De-energization Protocols:** Public Safety Power Shutoff guidelines.
- **Common Operating Picture**
- **SC811**

3. Fuel Supply Resiliency

- **Petroleum Diversion:** "Fuel Priority" protocol.
- **Mobile Microgrids:** Encourage the deployment of mobile battery storage and microgrids to provide power to emergency fire camps in rural or "off-grid" areas where lines may have been burned or de-energized.



Q&A



Tom Allen

Chief Technology Officer

SC Office of Regulatory Staff

803-737-0974 (o)

803-622-5308 (c)

TAllen@ORS.SC.GOV



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

Utility Wildfire Mitigation

In Washington

Johanna Hanson

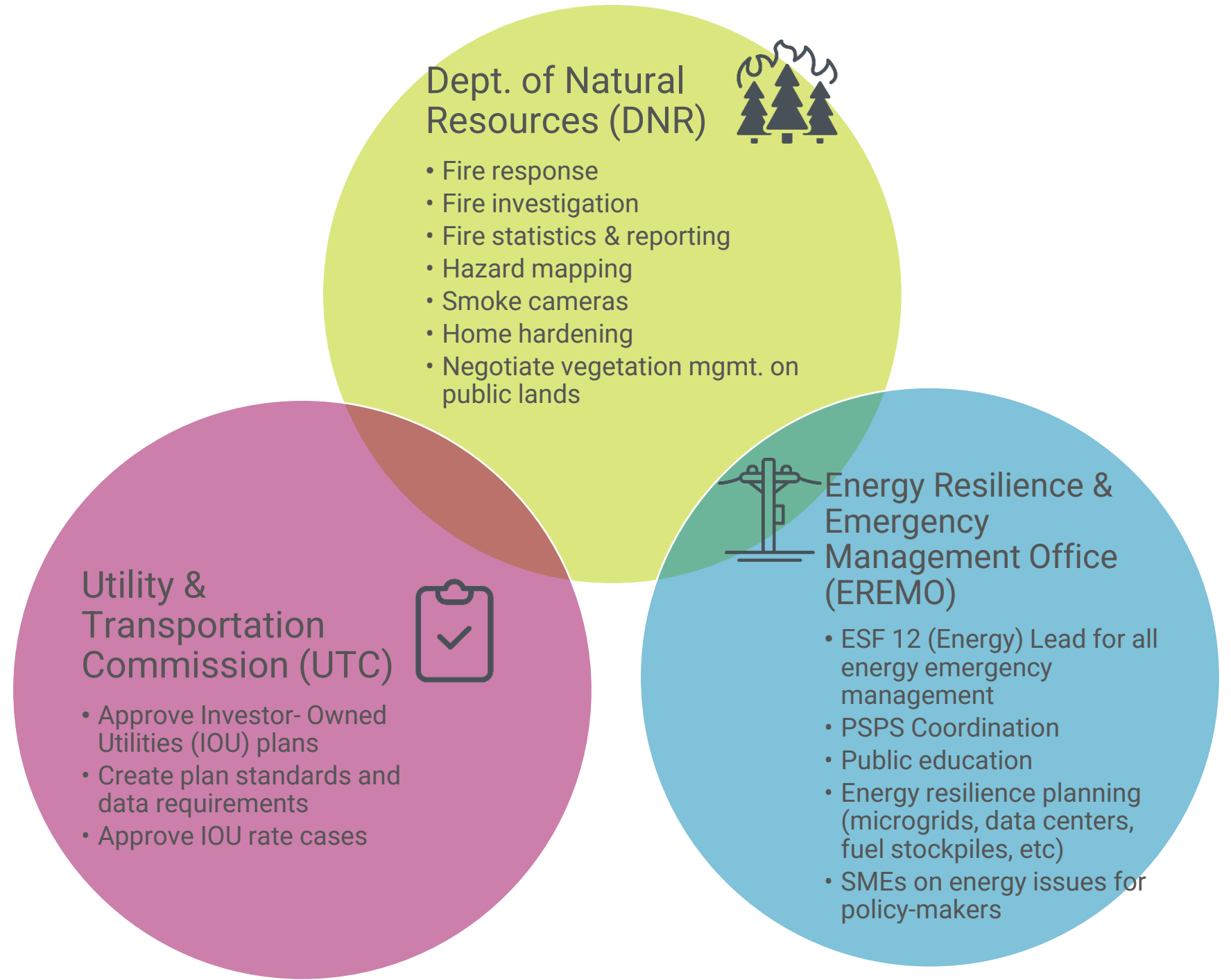
UTILITY WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROGRAM MANAGER

AUGUST 2026

Invest. Build. Serve.



State Agency Ecosystem



Utility Context

- **3 IOUs**
 - Regulated by commissioners
 - Large area, large customer base
 - Variable fire hazard profiles but mostly medium – high fire risk.
 - Investing heavily in technology, analytics, and staff
- **60 PUDs/Coops/Munis**
 - Regulated by their city/county councils
 - Variable areas, variable customer base
 - Variable fire hazards profiles – low - extreme
 - Variable experience, capabilities, investments

Fire Context

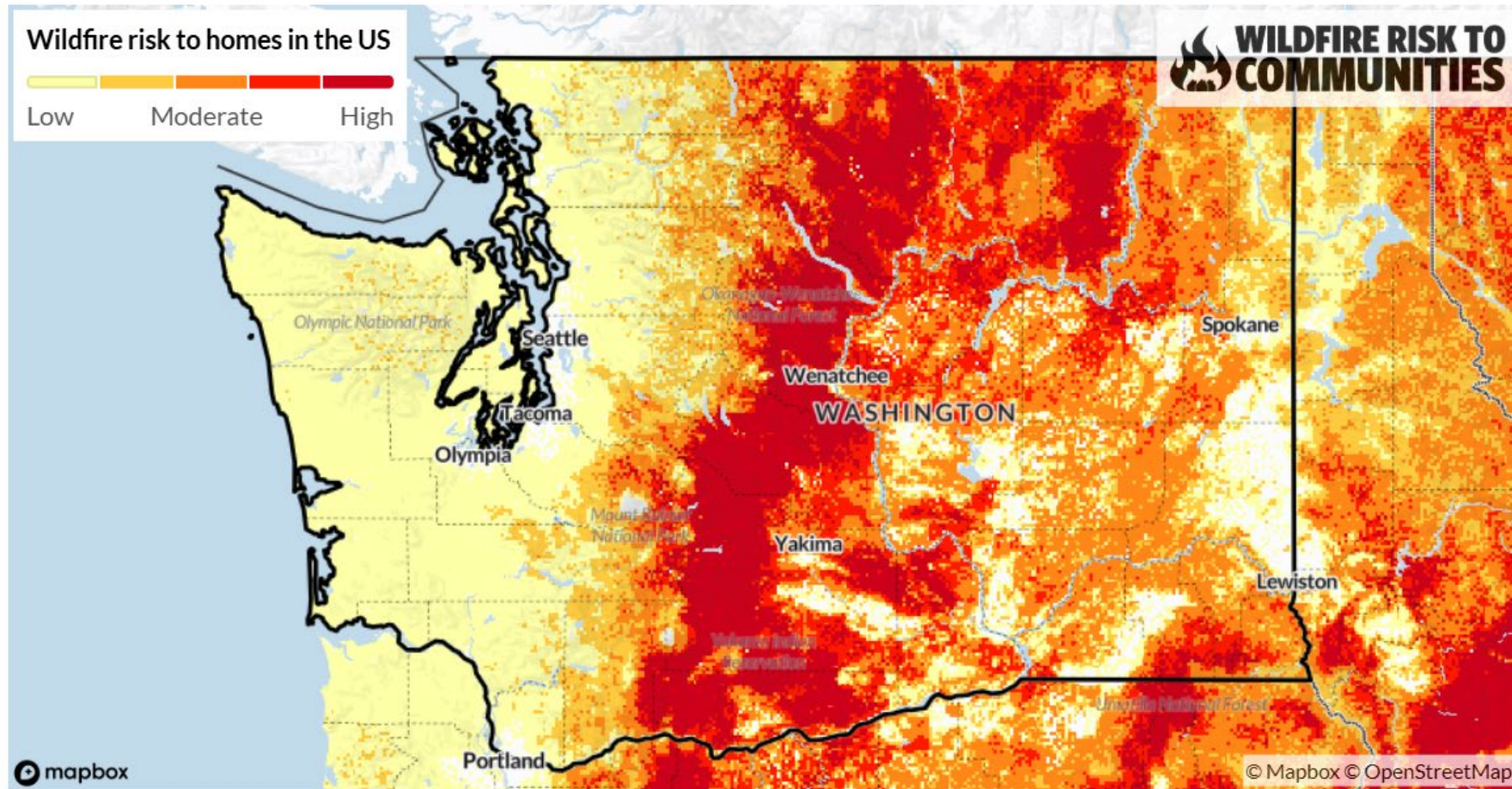


Wildfire Risk to Homes in Washington



Homes in Washington have, on average, greater risk than 94% of states in the US.

Risk to homes measures the relative consequence of wildfire to residential structures everywhere on the landscape, whether a home actually exists there or not.



Selected place



County line



State line

Planning Context

- **2018. Camp Fire, CA.** Triggered CA legislation to hold utilities liable for fire damages.
- **2020. Babb Road Fire, WA.** Public opinion shifted towards holding utilities liable via new legislation. Utilities begin considering PSPS
- **2023. WA passes HB 1032** requiring Wildfire Mitigation Plans
- **2023. Utility Wildfire Mitigation Workgroup formed** to provide peer learning and dissemination of best practices to utilities
- **2024. Utilities publish plans**
- **2025. Utility Wildfire Mitigation Program est** and staffed.
- *2027. Next planning update*

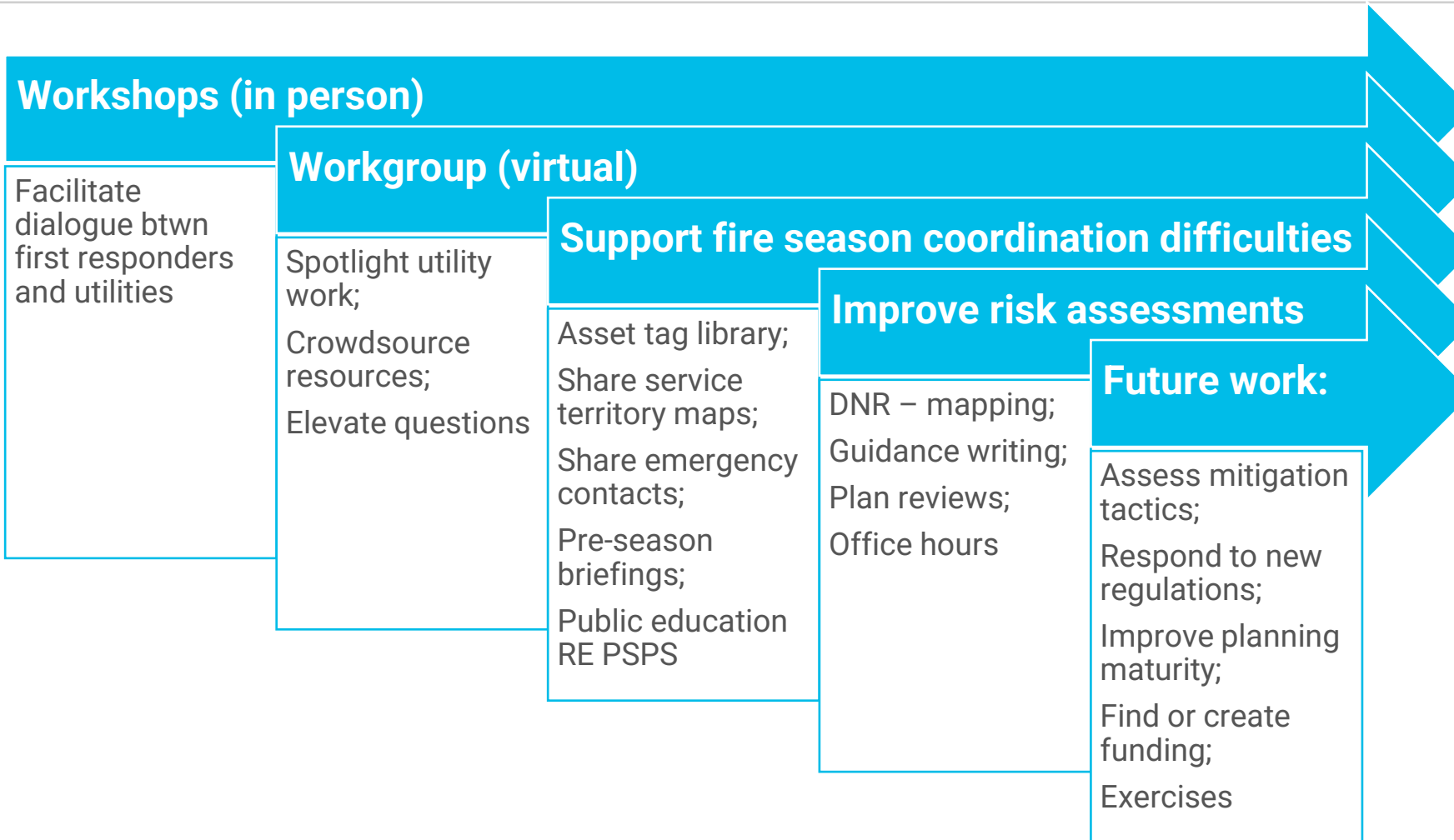
The plan

- Context of service territory
- A risk assessment
- Description of mitigation programs (*This is the part required by law*)
 - Weather monitoring
 - Design and construction standards
 - Vegetation management
 - Asset inspection
 - Workforce training
 - Relay/recloser practices
 - De-energization or Public Safety Power Shutoff policies (if any)
- Description of fire season
 - Coordination, notification
 - Roles, responsibilities, and decision making processes including triggers for PSPS
 - Policies related to restoring service
- Methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of the plan

About the program: Our Goals

- Assist utilities in writing a Wildfire Mitigation Plan that
 - Is the right size for their needs
 - Meets the requirements of the law
 - Supports utility wildfire mitigation program maturity
 - Supports other grid resilience planning and investments
- Connect electric industry expertise and work to broader community efforts to address wildfire risk.
- Identify and address barriers to wildfire risk mitigation both for utility-caused ignitions and fire impacts to utility infrastructure.
- Improve coordination during wildfire response

About the program: How we Grew



STATE CONSIDERATIONS FOR WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLANS

Mark Wenzel, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety

Wildfire Workshop for the Piedmont Region

August 12, 2026



MATURITY MODEL



	Category	I. Capability	II. Capability	III. Capability	IV. Capability	V. Capability	VI. Capability
	A. Risk assessment and mapping	1. Climate scenario modeling	2. Ignition risk estimation	3. Estimation of wildfire consequences for communities	4. Estimation of wildfire and PSPS risk-reduction impact	5. Risk maps and simulation algorithms	
	B. Situational awareness and forecasting	6. Weather variables collected	7. Weather data resolution	8. Weather forecasting ability	9. External sources used in weather forecasting	10. Wildfire detection processes and capabilities	
	C. Grid design and system hardening	11. Approach to prioritizing initiatives across territory	12. Grid design for minimizing ignition risk	13. Grid design for resiliency and minimizing PSPS	14. Risk-based grid hardening and cost efficiency	15. Grid design and asset innovation	
	D. Asset management and inspections	16. Asset inventory and condition assessments	17. Asset inspection cycle	18. Asset inspection effectiveness	19. Asset maintenance and repair	20. QA/QC for asset management	
	E. Vegetation management and inspections	21. Vegetation inventory and condition assessments	22. Vegetation inspection cycle	23. Vegetation inspection effectiveness	24. Vegetation grow-in mitigation	25. Vegetation fall-in mitigation	26. QA/QC for vegetation management
	F. Grid operations and protocols	27. Protective equipment and device settings	28. Incorporating ignition risk factors in grid control	29. PSPS op. model and consequence mitigation	30. Protocols for PSPS initiation	31. Protocols for PSPS re-energization	32. Ignition prevention and suppression
	G. Data governance	33. Data collection and curation	34. Data transparency and analytics	35. Near-miss tracking	36. Data sharing with research community		
	H. Resource allocation methodology	37. Scenario analysis across different risk levels	38. Presentation of relative risk spend efficiency for portfolio of initiatives	39. Process for determining risk spend efficiency of vegetation management initiatives	40. Process for determining risk spend efficiency of system hardening initiatives	41. Portfolio-wide initiative allocation methodology	42. Portfolio-wide innovation in new wildfire initiatives
	I. Emergency planning and preparedness	43. Wildfire plan integrated with overall disaster/ emergency plan	44. Plan to restore service after wildfire related outage	45. Emergency community engagement during and after wildfire	46. Protocols in place to learn from wildfire events	47. Processes for continuous improvement after wildfire and PSPS	
	J. Stakeholder cooperation and community engagement	48. Cooperation and best practice sharing with other utilities	49. Engagement with communities on utility wildfire mitigation initiatives	50. Engagement with LEP and AFN populations	51. Collaboration with emergency response agencies	52. Collaboration on wildfire mitigation planning with stakeholders	

Source: Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, Utility Wildfire Mitigation Model
https://energysafety.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/docs/wmp-2020/news/2.-utility-wildfire-mitigation-maturity-model-copy-correction_clean_final.pdf

EVALUATION CRITERIA

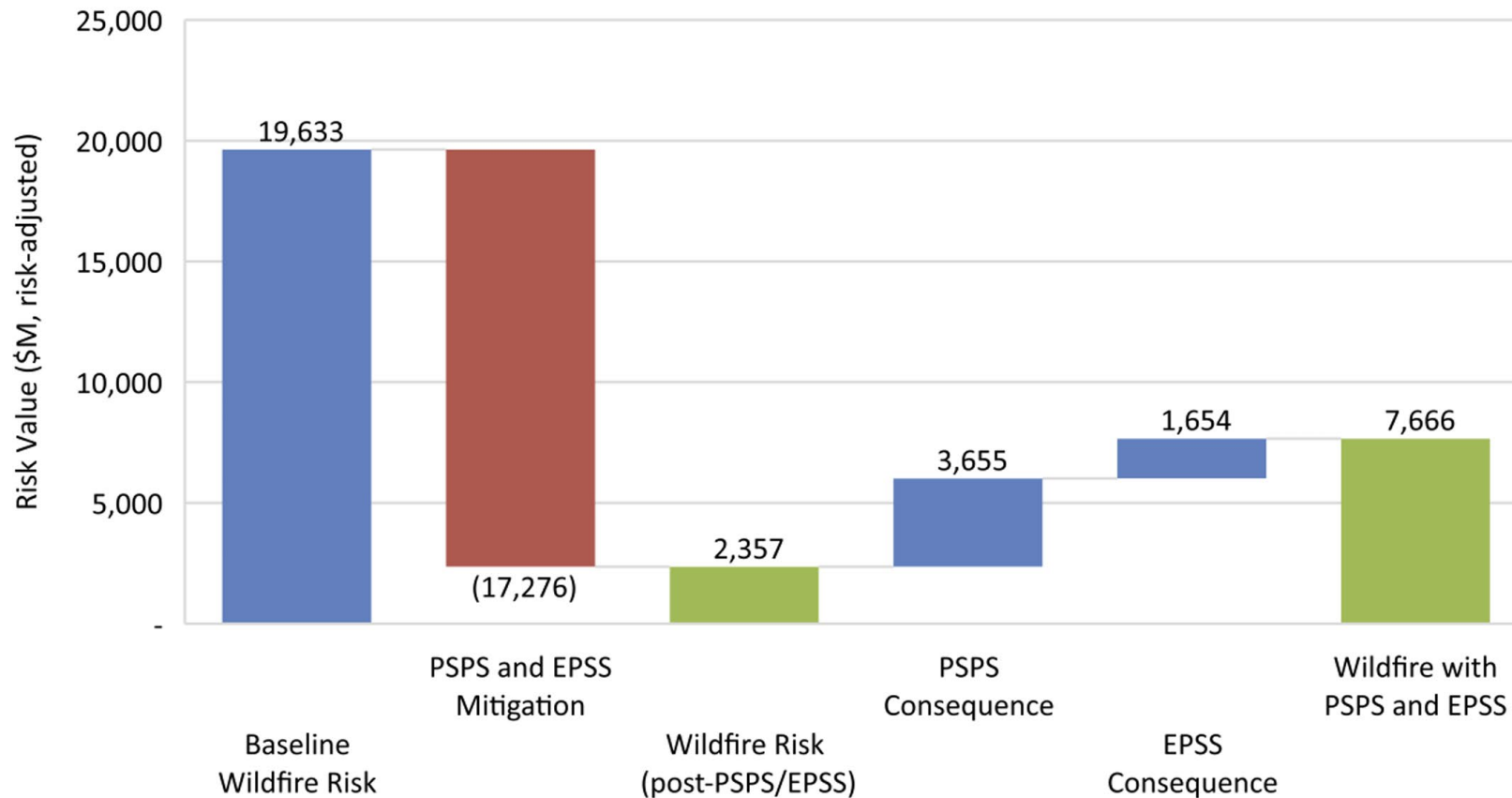


- Completeness
- Technical programmatic feasibility and effectiveness
- Resource use efficiency
- Continued progress
- Forward-looking growth
- Performance metrics
- Targets

Source: Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, Wildfire Mitigation Plan Guidelines, February 2025
<https://efiling.energysafety.ca.gov/eFiling/Getfile.aspx?fileid=58026&shareable=true>



WILDFIRE AND RELIABILITY RISK



Source: Pacific Gas and Electric
<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/divisions/safety-policy-division/reports/2024-ramp-application-pge051524.pdf>



THANK YOU



Mark.Wenzel@energysafety.ca.gov

<https://energysafety.ca.gov/>

