



Pend Oreille County Public Utility District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2026

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Pend Oreille PUD Activates Fire-Safe Mode as Wildfire Risk Increases

NEWPORT, Wash. - With wildfire risk increasing across the region, Public Utility District No. 1 of Pend Oreille County (PUD) has activated Fire-Safe Mode as part of its ongoing efforts to reduce wildfire risk.

Fire-Safe Mode changes how the electric system responds following an outage. Instead of automatically turning the power back on after an outage, the line remains de-energized until crews can inspect the area for any fire danger and safely restore service. While this approach can result in more frequent or longer outages, it greatly reduces the chance that damaged equipment or a downed tree branch could create sparks and start a wildfire.

The PUD wants to emphasize that Fire-Safe Mode is not a Public Safety Power Shutoff. The utility is not proactively turning off power because of wildfire risk. Instead, Fire-Safe Mode only changes how the system responds after an outage occurs.

In practice, this means outages during Fire-Safe Mode are “natural outages” caused by things like wind, trees, wildlife, or other events. When these outages occur, power may remain off until crews can inspect the affected area and confirm it is safe to restore service.

During periods of the most extreme fire danger, such as National Weather Service Red Flag Warnings, the PUD may operate in Elevated Fire-Safe Mode. In this setting, the system becomes even more sensitive. Additional field inspections are required before power can be restored, and those inspections may not begin until Red Flag Warning conditions have ended. This may extend outage durations but provides the highest level of protection against wildfire risk.

Customers are strongly encouraged to prepare for the possibility of extended outages. Simple steps such as charging phones and backup batteries, keeping flashlights and fresh batteries on hand, maintaining an emergency supply of food, water, medications and pet supplies, and fueling vehicles in advance can help families stay safe if an outage occurs.

Customers who rely on backup generators are also reminded to operate them safely. Portable generators should never be used indoors or in enclosed spaces because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Permanently installed generators should be equipped with an approved transfer switch that meets National Electric Code requirements. Improperly connected generators can create dangerous backfeed onto power lines, which poses a serious risk to utility crews.

The PUD will continue to monitor weather conditions and system operations and make adjustments as conditions warrant.

For more information about Fire-Safe Mode and wildfire preparedness, call 509-447-3137 or visit www.popud.org.

About Pend Oreille County Public Utility District

Pend Oreille PUD was established in 1936 and began operations in 1948. The PUD is governed by three locally elected Commissioners. A General Manager and staff operate the utility within policies set by the Board of Commissioners. The PUD has four operating systems: The electric system distributes electricity to the county, the production system produces power from the Box Canyon Hydroelectric Project, the water system consists of nine individual water distribution subdivisions, and the community network system provides wholesale broadband communication services. For more information visit: <http://popud.org>.