Colorado Springs Utilities

It's how we're all connected

WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN

Colorado Springs Utilities 2025

Contents

Executive Summary

Colorado Springs Utilities proudly serves the Colorado Springs community with safe, reliable, and competitively-priced utility services. Colorado Springs Utilities has assets located in areas with risk of large, fast-spreading wildfires. This plan details the recommended response to the increasing threat of wildfire and the actions being taken to minimize risk.

The recommendations in this plan are centered around:

- Vegetation management
- System improvements and system hardening
- Identifying and understanding wildfire risks and situational awareness

Background

Colorado Springs Utilities Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WFMP) was drafted in early 2024. It is a living document and will be reviewed and updated annually. This plan will continue to evolve as risk factors change, technologies improve, and environmental and wildfire conditions change.

Fire risk in Colorado has increased significantly due to a combination of factors including changing climate, population growth, and development patterns that extend into fire-prone areas, especially the wildland-urban interface (WUI). With hotter, drier conditions, the state has seen more intense fires affecting air quality and public health. Key contributing factors include record-high temperatures, prolonged drought, and more intense wind events that dry out vegetation and create ideal conditions for fires to ignite and spread.

Communities and utilities are responding by enhancing fire mitigation strategies.

Colorado Fire History Facts				
20 of 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2001	16 of the top 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2008	15 of the top 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2012	11 of the top 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2016	9 of the top 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2020

Source: Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (2025)

Wildfire Mitigation Plan Goals

Objective

This plan details Colorado Springs Utilities' response to the increasing threat of wildfires to the electric system and affirms our commitment to provide safe and reliable electric services to our customers.

Our organizational values and strategic objectives will guide the approach to the Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

Mission, Vision, Values of Colorado Springs Utilities

OUR MISSION	Provide safe, reliable and competitively-priced utilities to our customers.				
OUR VISION	Ready for today, prepared for a sustainable future.				
OUR VALUES	Safety, People, Trust, Responsibility, Collaboration, Continuous Improvement.				
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	Operational Excellence	Focus on the customer	Financial accountability	Support our community	Enable employee empowerment
2025 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	Optimize business processes Develop enterprise prioritization	Enhance outage management communication	Align long-term financial plans	Implement Energy Wise	Promote safety maturity excellence

Goals of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan

The goals of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan are comprised of several components.

Public safety - Colorado Springs Utilities takes public safety seriously. The goal of this plan is to assess and mitigate wildfire risk to protect lives, property, and physical assets from danger.

Employee safety - Colorado Springs Utilities takes employee safety seriously and strives to promote a culture of safety within the organization. The goal of this plan is to assess and mitigate risk.

Emergency preparedness - Our community can experience a variety of extreme weather events to include wildfire. The goal of the WFMP is to recognize wildfire as a recurring threat to utility infrastructure, utility watersheds, the communities we serve, employees, and customers.

Watershed protection - We provide some of the finest drinking water in the United States to our community. It's delivered to our homes and businesses through a complex system, built on generations of thoughtful planning and hard work. Our watersheds are located in heavily forested areas and our goal is to protect that infrastructure.

Reliability - We take pride in providing affordable, reliable, and sustainable electric service to our customers. We have one of the most reliable electric systems in the United States with services available more than 99.99% percent of the time. Our goal is to assess and mitigate wildfire risk impacts to our reliability.

Financial - We develop our annual budget to meet system needs, provide value to our customers' lives, and support economic growth. Base rates support the annual budget and are designed to cover the cost to provide services. Base rates fund major projects, system improvements and maintenance to meet regulations, support customer needs, and maintain service reliability. A goal of this plan is to mitigate the likelihood and aftermath of financial costs and potential liability associated with wildland fires.

Risk Assessment

Colorado Springs Utilities has assets located in areas where the risk of large, fast-spreading wildfires could occur. With recent wildfire incidents, there has been increased concern for the risk that electric utilities pose to the ignition of wildfires. This plan identifies the areas in the Colorado Springs Utilities electric service territory that have wildfire risk and proposes strategies to further reduce the risk of wildfire ignition.

Infrastructure Data – Wildfire Risk

Colorado Springs Utilities has over 4,050 miles of electric system assets as of January 2025.

Asset Classification	Asset Description	Substations/Miles in System
Transmission line assets Overhead (OH) Underground (UG)	Assets include conductor and structures operating at 115kV, 230kV	115kV OH = 78.7 miles 115kV UG = 26.2 miles 230kV OH = 125 miles
Sub-transmission line assets	Assets include conductor, structures, and switches operating at 34.5kV	34.5kV OH = 123.9 miles 34.5kV UG = 196.1 miles
Distribution line assets Overhead (OH) Underground (UG)	Assets operating at 12.5kV and 6.9kV include overhead conductor, underground conductor, structures, fiber optic cable, transformers, switches, reclosers, and streetlights	12.5kV OH = 706.9 miles 12.5kV UG = 2,791.8 miles 6.9kV OH = 8.36 miles
Substation assets	Transformers, protection devices, relays, reclosers, switchgear and control houses	60 substations

Circuits in High Fire Risk areas

Circuit Prioritization

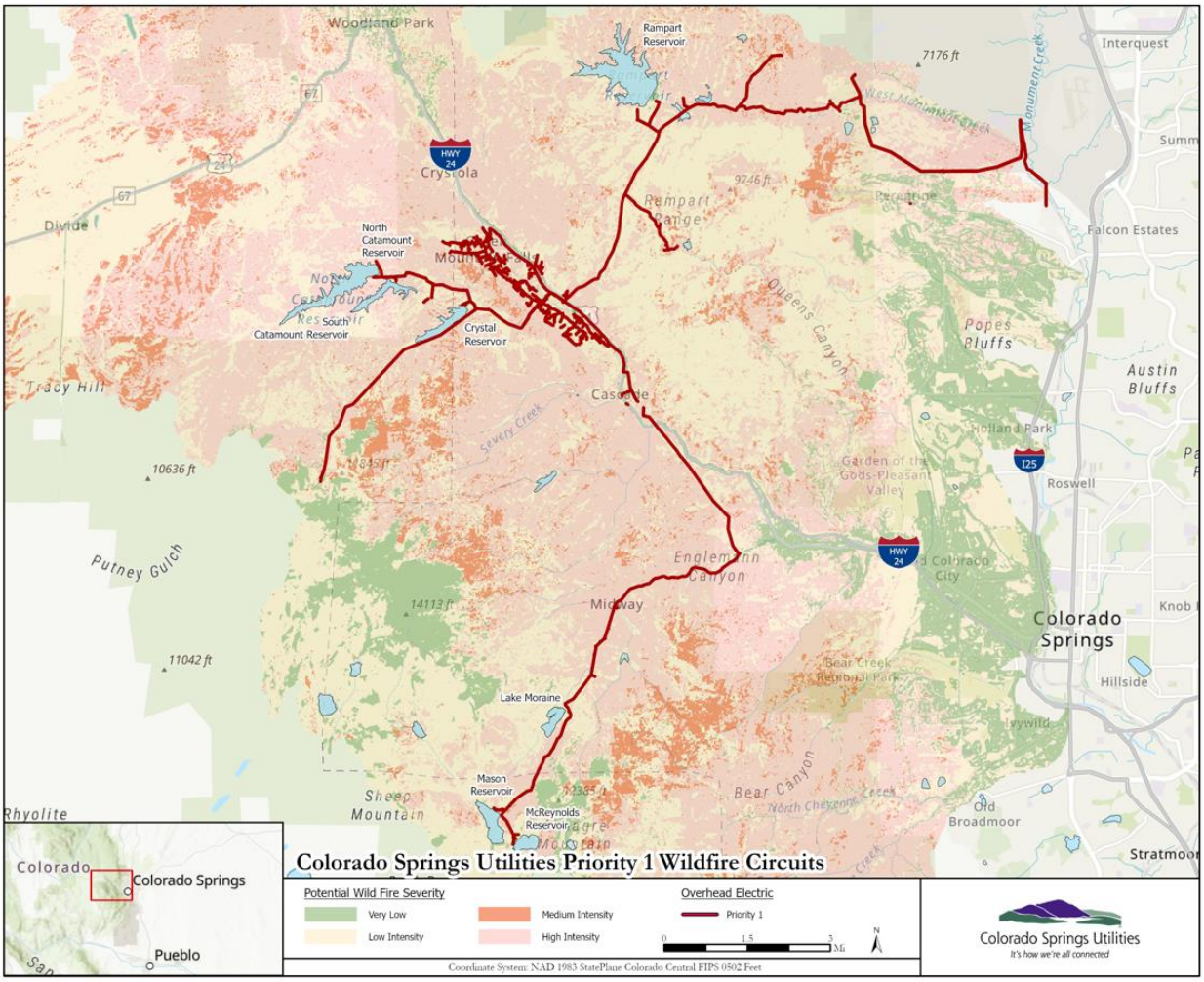
The initial prioritization focus will be in areas where the consequence of fire is greatest per the wildfire risk maps. Circuits were identified by their proximity to potential active crown fire (Priority 1), passive crown fire (Priority 2), or surface fire (Priority 3) areas. Active crown fire is defined as a forest fire that spreads from treetop to treetop. Passive crown fire burns individual trees or small groups of trees. Surface fire burns organic debris on the ground. The fire risk for all circuits will be evaluated in 2025.

Based on this information, the circuits identified are:

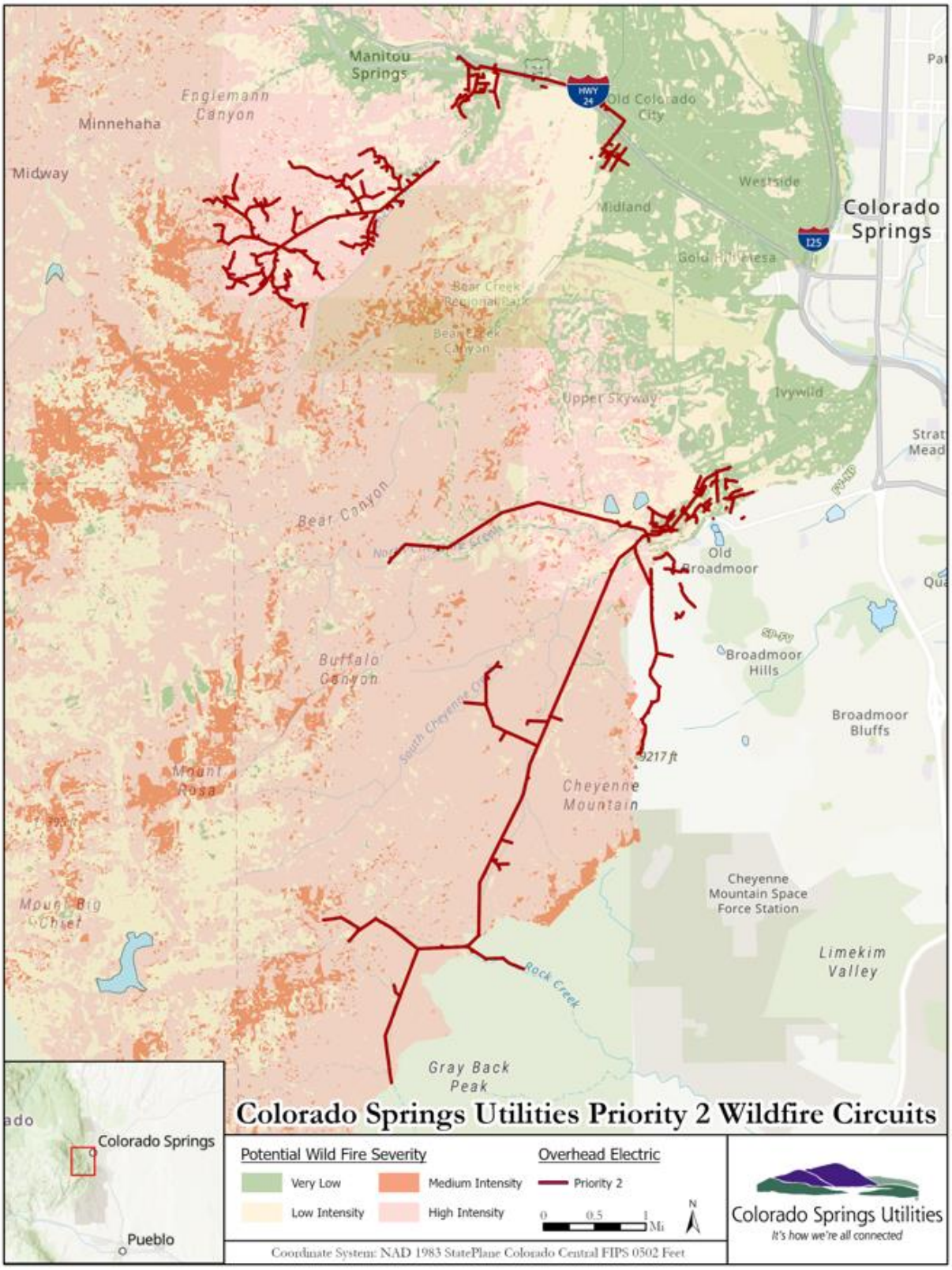
Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
7HY-3	13BR-3	12OV-1
12GM-2	13FV-4	12WN-24
12GM-4		13FV-2
34HY-2		12SP-34
34KC-5		13FV-1
34CW-9		13IP-3
		115 SP-FV

These circuits are shown on the fire risk maps below:

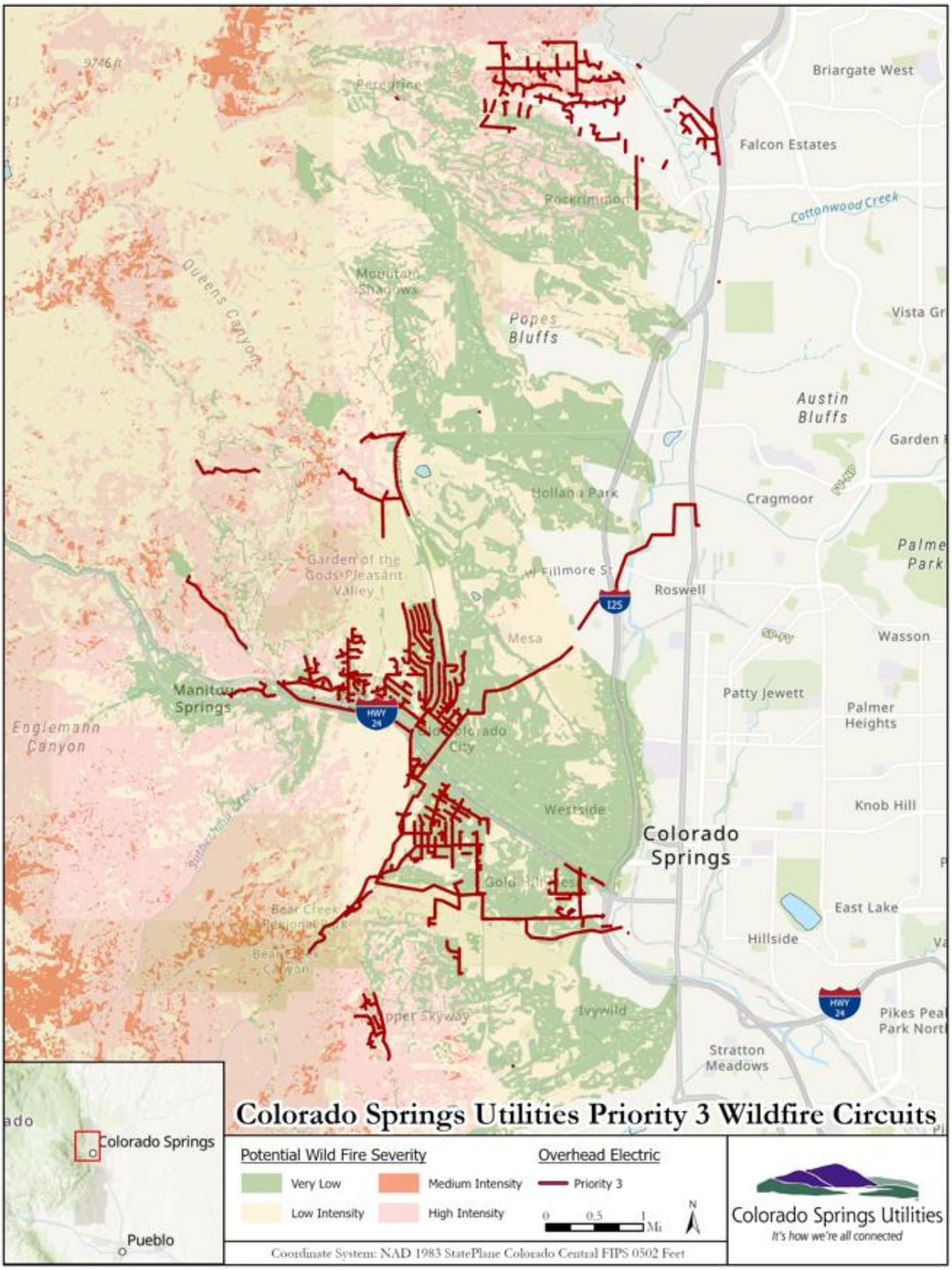
Priority 1


Woodland Park
Rampart Reservoir
7176 ft
Interquest
HWY 24
Crystola
9746 ft
Rampart Range
Divide
North Catamount Reservoir
South Catamount Reservoir
Crystal Reservoir
Falcon Estates
Queens Canyon
Popes Bluffs
Austin Bluffs
Tracy Hill
Cascade
Holland Park
10636 ft
Garden of the Gods-Pleasant Valley
Roswell
Putney Gulch
Englemann Canyon
Midway
Colorado Springs
11042 ft
Bear Creek Regional Park
Hillside
Lake Moraine
Mason Reservoir
McReynolds Reservoir
Sheep Mountain
Bear Canyon
Old Broadmoor
Rhyolite
Colorado
Colorado Springs
Pueblo
Colorado Springs Utilities Priority 1 Wildfire Circuits
Potential Wild Fire Severity
Very Low
Low Intensity
Medium Intensity
High Intensity
Overhead Electric
Priority 1
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Colorado Central FIPS 0502 Feet
Colorado Springs Utilities
It's how we're all connected

Priority 2


Manitou Springs
Englemann Canyon
Minnehaha
Midway
Old Colorado City
Westside
Midland
Colorado Springs
Gold Hill Mesa
Bear Creek Regional Park
Bear Creek Canyon
Upper Skyway
Ivywild
Bear Canyon
Old Broadmoor
Broadmoor Hills
Broadmoor Bluffs
Buffalo Canyon
South Cheyenne Creek
9217 ft
Mount Rosa
Cheyenne Mountain
Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station
Limekim Valley
Rock Creek
Gray Back Peak
Colorado Springs
Pueblo
Colorado Springs Utilities Priority 2 Wildfire Circuits
Potential Wild Fire Severity
Very Low
Low Intensity
Medium Intensity
High Intensity
Overhead Electric
Priority 2
0 0.5 1 Mi
N
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Colorado Central FIPS 0502 Feet
Colorado Springs Utilities
It's how we're all connected

Priority 3


Colorado Springs Utilities Priority 3 Wildfire Circuits
Potential Wild Fire Severity
Very Low
Low Intensity
Medium Intensity
High Intensity
Overhead Electric
Priority 3
0 0.5 1 Mi
N
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Colorado Central FIPS 0502 Feet
Colorado Springs Utilities
It's how we're all connected
Colorado Springs
Pueblo
Briargate West
Falcon Estates
Cottonwood Creek
Mountain Shadows
Queens Canyon
Popes Bluffs
Austin Bluffs
Cragmoor
Garden of the Gods
Pleasant Valley
Fillmore St
Roswell
Mesa
Wasson
Patty Jewett
Palmer Heights
Manitou Springs
Englemann Canyon
Colorado City
Westside
Knob Hill
Colorado Springs
East Lake
Hillside
Ivywild
Stratton Meadows
Pikes Peak Park North
HWY 24
I25

Fire Risk Maps and Modeling

Fuel Modeling

Colorado Springs Utilities uses a national dataset called Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools (LANDFIRE) to provide landscape scale geo-spatial cross-boundary analysis for wildland fire risk modeling. LANDFIRE is a shared program between the wildland fire management programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior. To determine the severity of wildfire hazard, the model accounts for several factors including vegetation type, aspect, vegetation density, health of fuel, insect mortality, and weather factors like wind. The data is overlaid with additional attributes (overhead electric, water pipelines, road crossings, post-fire analysis, etc.) to develop a spatial watershed-level risk layer with Colorado Springs Utilities infrastructure. These maps allow Colorado Springs Utilities to prioritize the areas of greatest wildfire risk associated to electrical system infrastructure and wildfire risk across the landscape. In turn, this tool provides an area of focus for further analysis for wildfire mitigation strategies and appropriate equipment applications for wildfire prevention.

Risk Mitigation

Current Practices and Existing Programs

Colorado Springs Utilities has a variety of mitigation practices, programs, and initiatives in place. The objectives of these existing practices are outlined below.

- Reduce the probability of objects contacting overhead power lines which could lead to ignition of nearby fuel sources with vegetation management, by hardening at-risk portions of the overhead system.
- Reduce the probability of failed equipment sparking proximate combustibles, by improving asset inspections.
- Reduce the probability of equipment sparking under normal operation by deploying CAL FIRE exempt equipment in at-risk areas.
- Prioritize the deployment of this plan's recommendations where risk is greatest as identified by wildfire risk maps.

Vegetation Management

According to research, vegetation is the top cause of utility related ignitions. Therefore, this plan emphasizes prevention tactics related to vegetation contact through robust vegetation management programs and equipment upgrades. Mitigation efforts to prevent vegetation contact include a vegetation management plan, undergrounding, covered conductor, and Enhanced Powerline Safety (EPSS) Settings.

Vegetation Management Plan

Vegetation management is an effective and proactive way to reduce wildfire ignitions due to vegetation contact. It is the foundation to preventing wildfire ignition on overhead assets.

Colorado Springs Utilities currently follows a vegetation management plan (VMP) that was developed and implemented to ensure system reliability and public safety of the overhead transmission and distribution system. The goal of the program is to comply with City Forestry ordinances and guidelines to protect the trees while minimizing the potential for electric outages, human injury, and property damage. The VMP is managed by a Colorado Springs Utilities certified arborist utility specialist, and field work is performed by outside contractors.

The 230 kV system is inspected annually by the Vegetation Management Program Manager. Any work that is needed based on the inspection, such as trimming, herbicide applications, or removals is performed at this time.

The 115 kV system is trimmed every three years and is then inspected by the Vegetation Management Program Manager after contractor crews complete field work. If any deficiencies are found, the contractors are sent back to correct the issues.

The optimal trim cycle for Colorado Springs Utilities' distribution territory is a three-year cycle. Scheduled trim cycles seek to maintain appropriate clearances between scheduled trim cycles to prevent flashover between vegetation and overhead conductors. If trim cycles are extended beyond the three-year cycle, the cost per tree and the number of crews necessary to ensure we return to our planned timeline increase exponentially as the cycle period increases. The objective is to keep limbs from growing above or between the conductors. Once this occurs, trimming techniques must be modified for safety reasons and the time per tree increases significantly. Therefore, contractors are expected to trim one-third of the distribution system annually.

Many utilities are on a five-year or greater trim cycle. Comparatively, Colorado Springs Utilities is exceeding industry standards. This is a key tactic for wildfire mitigation on overhead infrastructure. Maintaining a three-year turnaround helps keep system reliability, public safety, and contractor safety a priority. In addition, this keeps tree-related power outages, fire risk, and costs to a minimum.

Undergrounding

There are many benefits to undergrounding for the purpose of wildfire mitigation. In fact, studies have found it to be an effective technique to reduce wildfire risk. However, the cost of undergrounding is typically 3 to 5 times the cost of bare wire overhead construction. Colorado Springs Utilities' assets in the highest-risk wildfire areas are located on the west side of its service territory, often in mountainous, steep, and rocky terrain. Location, access, and granite bedrock impact feasibility, costs, and complexity. Additionally, undergrounding a customer's electric service line to their home adds to the program costs and complexity. Furthermore, an underground electric outage requires locating the exact cause of the failure which is a much more involved process. It is sometimes necessary to make several excavations to find the source of the outage. This translates into much longer outages and more disruption to roadways, easements and surrounding vegetation.

Covered Conductor

While tree trimming is the first step to reducing risk of vegetation contact, additional strategies can further prevent wildfire ignition. Trimming back vegetation to its proper easement prevents vegetation contact under normal conditions, but windstorms and tornados can still cause dangerous vegetation-contact on bare lines and broken poles, resulting in conductors laying on the ground and/or vegetation. Covered conductors may further reduce wildfire ignition risk by addressing these concerns. Covered conductors will be evaluated for efficacy and feasibility.

Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings

Remote control switches can be used to sectionalize circuits and reduce outage areas. Remote control switches are commonly used for operational flexibility but can be included in fire mitigation plans to reduce ignition risk in impacted outage areas.

Remote automatic reclosers are fault-interrupting automatic switches used to shut off power when a fault is detected (like a substation circuit breaker but used on distribution lines to further sectionalize the circuit and reduce the outage area). The normal operation of Colorado Springs Utilities' reclosers is to operate three times before lock out. This helps reduce outages when there is a temporary fault. However, remote automatic reclosers can be programmed to block reclosing during high wildfire risk events to prevent closing back into a permanent fault condition, reducing the risk of ignition. This enables Colorado Springs Utilities to take further precautions, such as performing a line patrol before reclosing an at-risk circuit, which could be particularly beneficial during red flag events.

Certain protection schemes can be used for detecting broken conductors. Some of these strategies may be most effective on transmission systems, rather than distribution systems. Some California utilities are piloting these protection schemes as part of their mitigation plans.

System Improvements and System Hardening

The second most common cause of wildfire ignition is equipment failure. To address this, the plan enhances asset inspections with techniques such as consistent pole climbing inspections and minor repairs, drone-aided 360-degree inspections, and infrared imaging.

In addition to equipment failures, some electric assets can eject sparks and cause wildfire ignition through normal operation. This plan also makes recommendations to harden the system against this risk by replacing equipment that sparks under normal operating conditions. An example would be to replace traditional fuses with current limiting and non-spark emitting options. Colorado Springs Utilities is piloting programs and will deploy if results are positive.

Equipment Inspections

Asset inspections on the transmission and distribution system are performed annually during line patrols in mountain areas and bi-annually in all other areas.

Colorado Springs Utilities maintains a 10-year transmission pole-to-pole climbing inspection with minor maintenance tasks. These pole inspections detect minor issues that cannot be seen from the ground and enable the execution of quick maintenance tasks, such as tightening hardware and

repairing or replacing components on a periodic basis. Some components cannot be fully inspected from the ground line patrols or from overhead drone inspections. Condition assessments and maintenance can be conducted concurrently. The transmission pole-to-pole inspection and maintenance program involves de-energizing and climbing each pole over a ten-year cycle. Circuits are identified for preventative maintenance and work is completed when outages are approved and qualified crews are available. The program has been successful in identifying issues that might have otherwise gone undetected.

A 360-degree view from drones could enhance Colorado Springs Utilities' inspection process. The Advanced Geometrics team recently acquired a drone that can be equipped with either a high-resolution camera for capturing clear imagery or a Light Detection and Range Sensing (LiDAR) sensor with a small backup camera to pick up rudimentary imagery when collecting LiDAR data. Select staff have received Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) piloting licenses and training to use the drone. While safety procedures, operational requirements, and training are still in progress, drone inspections could be a beneficial tool for supplementing in-person inspections.

Wood pole inspections are performed on a 10-year cycle for transmission, distribution, and streetlights. This includes ground line strength testing. Steel structure and foundation inspections on transmission systems ensure the reliability of Colorado Springs Utilities' system and include measuring thickness of steel poles, coatings, and concrete foundation hardness testing.

In 2024, Colorado Springs Utilities Electric Advanced Design team partnered with the Geographic Information System (GIS) team to create a geospatial services contract that includes Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) services and aerial maintenance for the distribution and transmission system. The LiDAR data will be used to model and examine all overhead lines for line-to-ground clearances, line-to-line clearances, potential issues during inclement weather, and may predict vegetation issues.

Proactive replacements or upgrades may be performed to reduce failures that could result in wildfire ignition. This could include transformer and switch upgrades based on age; replacement of wood poles with stricter requirements for integrity of the pole, and/or switching to steel structures instead of wood. Infrastructure improvements will continue to be evaluated and implemented to meet WFMP goals.

CAL FIRE exempt equipment

CAL FIRE is an acronym for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). CAL FIRE exempt equipment is equipment that is exempt from certain requirements due to its design or function. This includes equipment that is designed to prevent sparks and arcs from igniting flammable materials, and equipment that does not carry an electrical current.

Colorado Springs Utilities is evaluating expanding its use of CAL FIRE exempt equipment to replace equipment that sparks under normal operating conditions. Examples include actions such as replacing traditional fuses with current-limiting and non-spark-emitting options. Retrofitting circuits with CAL FIRE exempt equipment could ensure the system is built with equipment that has been tested and proven to operate without generating sparks or arcs that would occur on traditional devices.

Wildlife Protection

Colorado Springs Utilities has raptor and wildlife protection standards defined for the distribution system and is piloting different solutions to upgrade wildlife protection at overhead transformers. This pilot is taking place on 12SP-35, a circuit that has a higher number of outages due to squirrels than other circuits in the system.

Water Distribution

Colorado Springs Utilities is dedicated to ensuring the community's safety and the reliable delivery of utility services, even during wildfires. The water system is designed to meet best practices to deliver water to customers and for firefighting needs.

The utility service territory is divided into 55 pressure zones, each controlled by valves to manage pressure and flow, especially during fire emergencies. The city's unique terrain and elevation contribute to a higher-pressured water system compared to other cities in the country. Water pressure is continuously monitored to ensure reliability. In emergencies, like the Waldo Canyon Fire, pressure can be increased in specific areas as needed.

Colorado Springs Utilities works closely with the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) to assess and meet water needs during firefighting efforts, ensuring seamless coordination. Conventional water delivery systems are typically sized to fight structure fires, not wildland fires. Wildland fires are more dynamic events covering a larger area, consuming fuels from vegetative cover and forested terrains in addition to those fuels provided by typical structures. Consequently, the firefighting water demands for a wildland fire in an urban setting will be higher than those needed for single structure fires.

Colorado Springs Utilities and the CSFD worked collaboratively to develop a water operations response plan for a large-scale wildland fire on the west side of Colorado Springs in the area known as the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Four studies have been completed since 2008 with the most recent conducted in 2022. These studies provided alternatives and solutions to maximize the available water supply and identify how it can most efficiently be used in the event of a wildland fire resulting in Utilities and the CSFD having a better understanding of the water system's capabilities and limitations.

During these studies, CSFD fire assumptions included 'very high' and 'extreme' fire danger events. The project team determined that the total firefighting water demand based on the very high fire (3-alarm) scenario resulted in a firefighting demand of 7,500 gallons per minute (gpm) across multiple hydrants. For comparison, water distribution systems are typically designed for 1,500 gpm to fight a residential structure fire. In locations where greater than 1,500 gpm firefighting water demand is needed, it would be necessary to utilize more than one hydrant to achieve the predicted fire flow.

The primary objective of the studies was to develop a set of recommended improvements to address limitations and leverage capabilities of the water distribution system to increase the ability to fight a WUI fire. Based on these studies and additional evaluations conducted as part of the 2021 Finished Water System Plan, nineteen specific WUI projects were identified and in 2025, are either completed, in progress, or scheduled.

Colorado Springs Utilities has identified critical pump stations in areas with high vegetation density. These pump stations have been equipped with either on-site generators or the ability to use power from a mobile generator in the event they lose power.

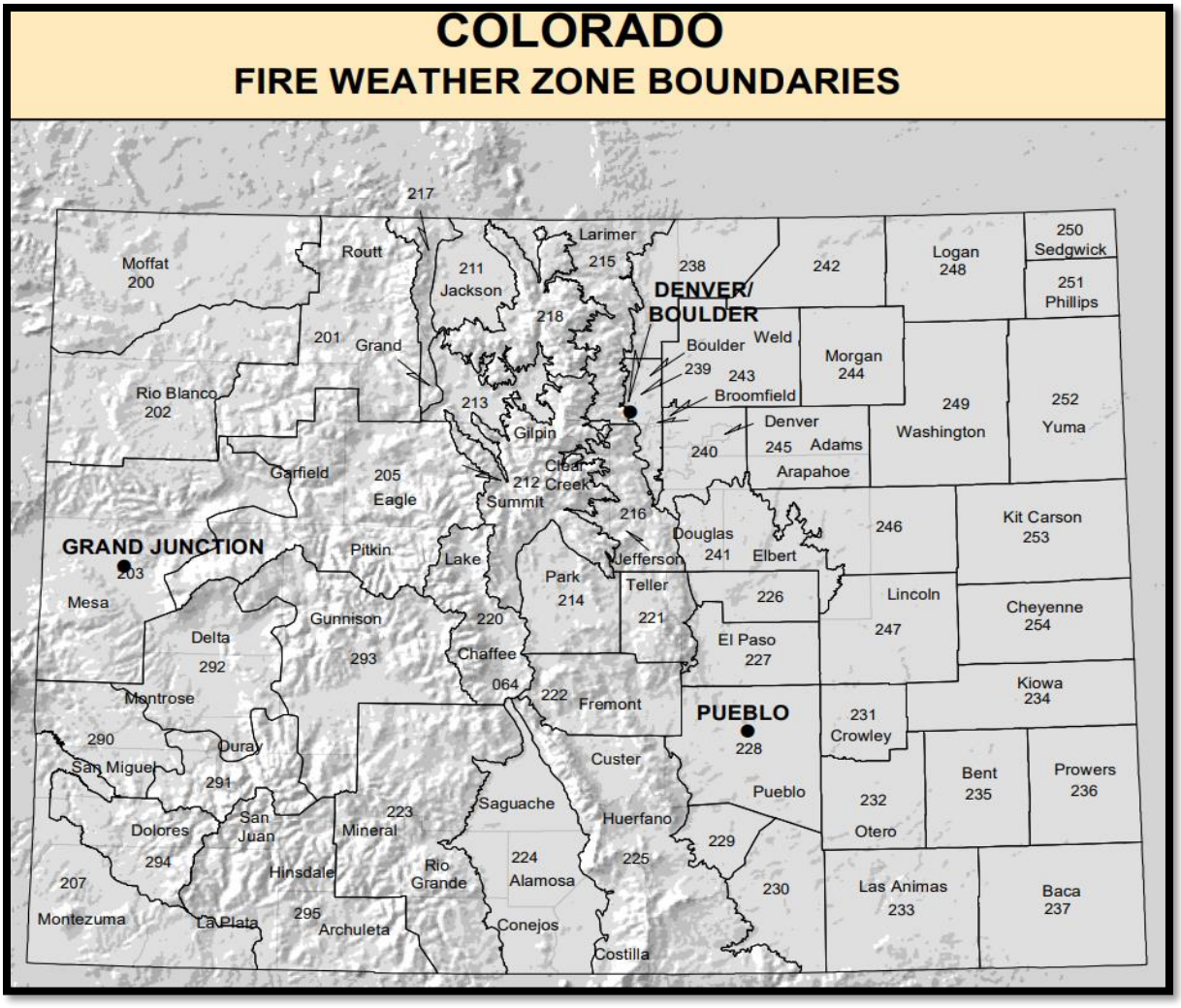
Situational Awareness- Identifying & Understanding Wildfire Risk

Identifying high fire-risk geographic areas and high fire risk conditions is a crucial first step in preventing wildfires. Pinpointing the locations of highest risk across a service territory provides critical data that informs operational decisions.

Fire Weather Zones

National Weather Service (NWS) 'fire weather zones' (see link below) are designated areas where fire danger is evaluated and communicated based on local conditions.

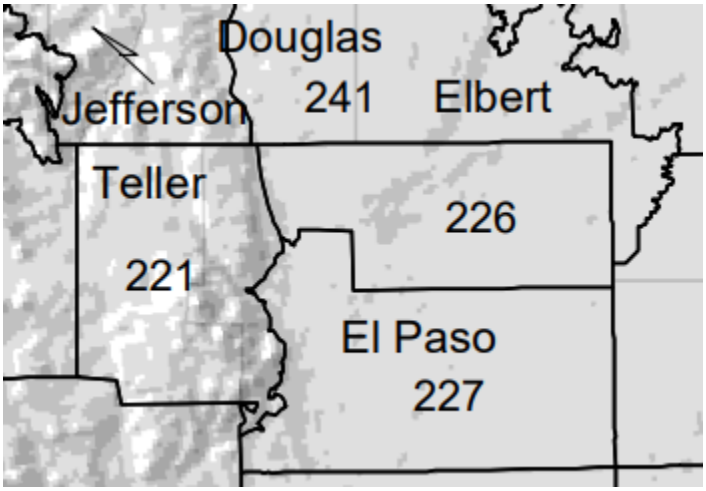
There are three individual Fire Weather Zones in El Paso County: Zone 226 (Northern El Paso), Zone 227(Southern El Paso), and Zone 221(Teller and El Paso/Pikes Peak).



Link - Fire Weather Zone Forecast Information

Source- weather.gov

Zoomed in view of surrounding Colorado Springs Fire Weather Zones



Source- weather.gov

Red Flag Warning- National Weather Service

A Red Flag Warning (RFW) is determined based on a combination of weather and fuel conditions (as determined by (NWS) fire management partners) for any 3 hours or more in a 12-hour period. The criteria for the forecast area of the Pueblo NWS office are defined as follows:

Basic Criteria

- Frequent gusts of 25 mph or greater
- Relative humidity (RH) of 15% or less
- Dry thunderstorms - 15% coverage or more, constituting a Lightning Activity Level (LAL) 6

Other Factors

In addition to the basic criteria above, a combination of other elements may result in Red Flag Conditions.

- Haines Index of 5 or 6 - Indicates a moderate or high potential for large, plume-dominated fire growth
- Wind shifts associated with frontal passages
- First significant lightning event (wet or dry) after an extended hot and dry period
- Poor relative humidity recovery overnight (RH remains at 40% or lower)
- Any combination of weather and fuel moisture conditions which, in the judgment of the forecaster, would cause extensive wildfire occurrences

Summary of RFW Criteria

- Relative Humidity: <15%
- Wind Gusts: Over 25 mph
- Duration: Present for at least 3 consecutive hours in the zone

- Fuel Conditions: Must be dry enough to be considered 'critical', as determined by forestry partners

Wildfire Modeling Software

Many utilities with high wildfire risk are making use of on-demand wildfire modeling software. Technosylva is a prevalent solution deployed by utilities in California, Xcel and other utilities in the western United States. Colorado Springs Utilities researched this tool and attended a demonstration of its capabilities. Such software can provide advanced weather and fire spread forecasting and predictive analysis for short and long-term risk forecasting. Wildfire Analysts can provide near-instant simulations of different fire scenarios showing where the fire will go and what the impact will be, including the number of buildings, critical infrastructure, and population impacted. This modeling can be combined with advanced weather forecasts and utility infrastructure to predict when and where the greatest risks are on the system, so the utility can identify which assets may be most at risk for causing ignition and the associated financial impacts. This could enable not only long-term fire mitigation planning and system hardening project prioritization, but real-time operational response and dynamic fire mitigation strategies, such as deploying fast trip or non-reclosing protection settings.

Utility industry experts report the current risk model seems to follow leading practices and that it is a sound approach to look at fire risk and behavior models and overlay that with electric utility asset maps. The current model allows Colorado Springs Utilities to start mitigation efforts immediately.

Implementing a solution like Technosylva's software for the long-term would enable more dynamic operationally based decisions and elevate asset risk assessments, allowing better modeling of consequences and predictive analytics on assets. However, resources are needed to implement the software solution, link necessary data to the software, and provide employees with weather and fire expertise to interpret and use the model.

National Situational Awareness Networks

Colorado Springs Utilities will continue to utilize the publicly available tools to help utilities coordinate response efforts. Maintaining close coordination with local and national weather services is critical, especially during fire season. Other tools such as ALERTWest and Watch Duty are being explored.

Public Safety Power Shutoff

Some electric utilities are utilizing a 'Public Safety Power Shutoff' (PSPS) option triggered by certain weather and fire conditions to mitigate risk, however, Colorado Springs Utilities does not and believes additional research and dialogue with first responders, customers, and the Utilities Board are necessary before considering this approach, due to the significant impact to customers. Public safety power shutoffs would only be considered as a last resort under the most extreme wildfire risk conditions.

Our primary goal is to keep customers in service as much as possible and we believe a focus on system improvements and mitigation strategies overrides the need for public safety power shutoffs.

Wildland Fire Team

Colorado Springs Utilities has a wildland fire team actively working to prevent wildfires and respond in the event of a wildfire in the service territory. The Catamount Wildland Fire Team has members that represent all four services and the City of Colorado Springs. These fire team members are trained to fight wildland fires. They respond to wildland fires on Colorado Springs Utilities' property as well as support local fire departments.

Team mission

- Pre-fire mitigation/fire watch/Prescribed Fire Program
- Fire suppression
- Infrastructure protection
- Promoting strategic planning, decision making and leadership development for all team members

Team composition

- 40+ qualified WLFT members with specialties that include:
    - Pre-fire planning/forestry management
    - Emergency fire response/suppression
    - Post-fire recovery
- Five crews on rotating availability and additional personnel available for support on larger incidents
- All four utility services represented providing extensive infrastructure knowledge
- City of Colorado Springs representation and knowledge
- Five Type 6 wildland fire brush trucks
- One Type 3 wildland fire engine
- One tactical water tender, and one large water tender
- Numerous All-Terrain and Utility Terrain Vehicles (ATV/UTVs)
- Heavy equipment (dozers, graders, excavators) including associated transportation vehicles and qualified operators

Implemented Standards and New Program Initiatives

2025 Action Plan

System Hardening Projects

- Refine risk map to define system hardening projects at a more granular level than by entire circuit.
    - An initial risk model is expected to take several months.
    - This model will expand the risk map out to the east side of the service territory to include urban parks, grassland areas out east, and any other forested areas in the service territory.
- From this model, rebuild projects will be identified and designed.
    - Capital budget has been approved for project spend to begin in 2025.
- LiDAR data collection and Power Line Systems - Computer Aided Design and Drafting (PLS CADD) system modeling of existing system to identify any design or vegetation issues that may need to be addressed.
    - This will become an input into the risk model.
- System improvement efforts to include:
    - Undergrounding at-risk portions of overhead lines if cost-effective.
    - Replace overhead bare conductor with covered conductor.
    - Replace overhead fuses and surge arrestors with CAL FIRE exempt models.
    - Replace wood structures with steel structures or upsized poles.

Standards Updates

- Create new equipment specifications and update construction standards to include:
    - CAL FIRE exempt equipment
    - Covered conductor
    - Steel support structures

Operational Strategies

- Determine Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings such as non-reclose settings, requirements/conditions for deployment, decision matrixes, crew response, and other impacted operational procedures.
- Maintain vegetation management schedules, ensuring any identified priority circuits do not slip schedule.
- Enhance proactive equipment replacement programs to include transformer and recloser replacements on priority circuits.
- Continue in-house drone inspection pilot to determine viability of improving and assisting inspection programs (vegetation and assets).

Budget Impacts

We develop our annual budget to meet system needs, provide value to our customers' lives and support economic growth. Base rates support the annual budget and are designed to cover the cost to provide services. Base rates fund major projects, system improvements and maintenance to meet regulations, support customer needs, and maintain service reliability. A goal of this plan is to mitigate the likelihood and aftermath of financial costs and potential liability associated with wildland fires. Funding and budget needs have been included in the Colorado Springs Utilities five-year budget plan. These infratructure protections will continue to be reviewed annually.

Community Engagement and Partnership

Industry Engagement

Colorado Springs Utilities actively participates in various utility industry meetings, summits, conferences, and consortiums with a wildfire focus. Listed below are just a few of the utility industry partners we regularly collaborate with:

- American Public Power Association (APPA)
- Transmission & Distribution Maintenance Management Association (TDMMA)
- Large Public Power Council (LPPC)
- North American Transmission Forum (NATF)
- Alltricity Network (Formerly known as RMEL)

Regional and Local Fire Partnership

Colorado Springs Utilities actively partners with a variety of regional entities to include Colorado Springs Fire Department, Colorado Utility Wildfire Consortium, and the National Weather Service. Members of our Wildland Fire Team have provided firefighting resources to extinguish fires in nearby communities as well as other communities in the region and the nation.

Fire Education

Colorado Springs Utilities educates elementary school age children on the dangers and fire hazards associated with electric utility infrastructure and provides customers with access to helpful links to ensure our community is wildfire ready.

How You Can Prepare

- CSFD Wildfire Ready- Home | Colorado Springs Fire Department
- Live Wildfire Ready | Colorado State Forest Service | Colorado State University
- Colorado Wildfire Risk Map- Wildfire Risk Viewer
- Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management- Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management | Pikes Peak Regional Emergency Management
- NWS Pueblo Fire Weather: Fire Weather Zone Forecast Information
- Landfire: LANDFIRE Map Viewer

Conclusion

Colorado Springs Utilities is committed to reducing wildfire risk. Commitments to vegetation management, system hardening, and situational awareness will contribute to wildfire risk mitigation. The Wildfire Mitigation Plan will continue to build on the foundational efforts of the 2024 Wildfire Mitigation Plant. The Wildfire Mitigation Plan will evolve over time and Colorado Springs Utilities will continue to enhance the electric system and maintain reliable service.