WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROGRAM

Overview

Public safety is at the foundation of all we do. We recognize that wildfires pose a significant year-round threat to our customers, communities and our state as a whole – and we are proactively implementing programs to minimize ignition risks associated with operating our system. As part of our commitment to safety, we're continually making strategic investments and improvements to support our power grid, build resilience and increase our situational awareness to mitigate wildfire risk.

We launched our Wildfire Mitigation Program in 2019 to help protect lives, homes and Colorado's forests from the threat of wildfire. This program includes:

- System hardening initiatives and inspections to strengthen equipment, reduce the chance of causing ignitions and increase protection in extreme weather conditions.

- Operational and situational awareness efforts, which increase the sensitivity of our electric system protection during high fire threat conditions to reduce the risk of potential ignitions.

- Connecting with members of the public, local government and first responders – especially those in designated Wildfire Risk Zones – to understand the unique needs of each community.

Our Initiatives

As climate conditions have changed throughout the west, the overall risk, frequency and severity of wildfires has increased. The traditional idea of a fire "season" has evolved into a year-long battle against rapidly changing and more extreme weather conditions that can generate larger, more intense and faster moving wildfires. The investments we're making in our power grid help minimize the risk of equipment-caused wildfires. Some of our recent investments include:

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and LiDAR-equipped Helicopter Inspections
We have implemented UAS (commonly referred to as 'drones') for inspecting equipment and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging)-equipped helicopter inspections along electric lines within Wildfire Risk Zones. LiDAR sensing creates 3D maps of our equipment to perform wind strength analysis. This helps us make informed decisions about where we might consider hardening equipment like power poles and other infrastructure to reduce the likelihood of equipment being damaged by trees during extreme weather conditions.

Wildfire Safety Settings Pilot
As part of our Wildfire Safety Settings pilot program, we've upgraded the electric distribution system in limited areas with wildfire devices that support more sensitive protection settings during periods of high wildfire risk. These upgrades allow the system in these areas to interrupt the flow of energy through a power line segment when a fault is detected, such as a tree branch or other object contacting the power line, to prevent the potential ignition of ground fuel. When the system is in Wildfire Safety Settings mode, the line remains de-energized until crews can patrol the area to ensure it is safe to restore service. Communities in these limited areas may experience more frequent or longer outages during the pilot program.

Early Wildfire Detection Cameras

Our network of rapid detect camera systems covers more than 1.5 million acres across Colorado. These systems are deployed on high vantage points and continuously scan the landscape using 360-degree, ultra-high-definition cameras and artificial intelligence to spot, evaluate and signal wildfire activity within a 15-mile radius. As soon as an incident is detected, a notification is sent to Xcel Energy and first responders, providing detailed visuals and location triangulation. Wildfire detection cameras offer greater visibility for first responders in hard-to-monitor terrain, providing critical early and real-time situational awareness when a wildfire ignites, allowing them to rapidly respond to fire events with greater accuracy and control.

Risk Modeling

To prioritize and target wildfire mitigation efforts, we're continually improving our wildfire risk modeling and evaluating new information to further refine our wildfire mitigation activities. Our latest wildfire risk modeling software uses advanced fire spread modeling algorithms and dynamic weather data to enhance wildfire risk identification and consequence estimates. Each day, the software evaluates current and forecasted weather conditions, detailed wind speed/direction, moisture levels and ground fuel conditions to estimate the direction and extent of where a wildfire might spread if an ignition were to occur. This risk modeling and simulation also provides valuable insight on the potential consequences of wildfires as fire weather conditions dynamically change.

Community outreach

To share information about our wildfire mitigation efforts, we meet regularly with communities across Colorado, especially those in high-fire threat areas. Our outreach efforts also include collaborating and benchmarking with the Electric Power Research Institute, Edison Electric Institute, national labs and our neighboring utilities to share lessons learned and best practices.

Learn more

For more information on the Wildfire Mitigation Program, visit XcelEnergyWildfireMitigation.com. For questions, call 833-352-0087 or email info@XcelEnergyWildfireMitigation.com.

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