

Wildfire Resilient Power Grid Act of 2020

As wildfires have devastated many western states and firefighting resources are stretched to the brink, the importance of reducing ignition sources cannot be overstated. While dryer, hotter, and windier conditions caused by climate change have led to fuel loading and other conditions that increase wildfire risk, a disproportionate number of fires have been shown to be ignited by aging power line infrastructure.

Sen. Wyden has introduced the *Wildfire Resilient Power Grid Act of 2020* to ensure that power companies do their part to reduce the risk of fire through power system upgrades, fire safety equipment installation, and proper vegetation management. Through a matching grant program, this Act will incentivize utilities to do more to reduce wildfire risks while also bearing a substantial part of the costs involved. By partnering with utilities around the country we can increase wildfire mitigation efforts at a modest cost to the public—a fire prevention investment that will pay dividends.

The Wildfire Resilient Power Grid Act of 2020:

- Establishes a \$1 billion-per-year matching grant program for power companies through the Department of Energy to reduce the risk of power lines causing wildfires.
- Gives special priority to smaller, rural electric companies to ensure mitigation efforts are targeted to forested rural areas.
- Promotes proven methods for reducing wildfire risks, including undergrounding of lines, installing fast-tripping protection systems, and constructing weather monitoring stations to respond to electrical system fire risks.
- Provides for hardening of overhead power lines and installation of fault location equipment where undergrounding of power lines is not a favorable option.
- Ensures fuels management activities of power companies are carried out in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.
- Requires power companies to have “skin in the game” by making the program a 1-to-1 matching grant, with an exception for smaller utilities where the matching requirement is one third of the grant.
- Delivers accountability on the part of utilities and the Department of Energy by generating a report every two years on efforts conducted under the grant program.