



Turning off reclosers during the summer helps utilities prevent power lines from sparking wildfires. PHOTO COURTESY OF UMATILLA ELECTRIC

# Protecting Vulnerable Areas During Wildfire Season

Klickitat County is facing another hot summer—one likely to dry out fuels and increase the danger of wildfires.

While daily monitoring of weather events impacting the region takes place year-round, Klickitat PUD also specifically tracks state and local fire danger levels.

As fire danger increases in warm weather, customers in higher fire danger areas within the county may be impacted by outages. To mitigate the risk of wildfires caused by electric utility infrastructure, Klickitat PUD alters settings on protective reclosers in areas of the county more susceptible to wildland fires.

Much like a breaker in an electrical panel at home, a recloser is a protective device installed on the power line designed to trip—or operate and open—when something causes the wire to fault.

However, reclosers can attempt to automatically close and let power flow again. As the recloser attempts to close, power lines attempt to clear whatever is causing the issue. If the line is unable to clear itself after a few attempts, the recloser remains open, and the power line is deenergized.

To help prevent a fire from sparking due to a tree limb on the line, a line down or myriad other events, KPUD staff adjusts settings in the recloser to a non-reclose or one-shot status to prevent the device from automatically attempting to close. Under these settings, the recloser immediately opens and takes out power to

customers downstream of the device. This is done to stop the line from igniting nearby fuel sources.

Once the recloser has operated and an outage occurs, KPUD crews are dispatched. Upon arrival, line patrols begin, starting at the recloser device and continuing downstream to all taps fed from the main power line.

By performing thorough line patrols, crews can determine whether there are hazards impacting the power line before reenergizing it. If there are damages, repairs are made prior to restoring power.

Full line patrols are required prior to energizing the line. KPUD asks customers to report any damage or unsafe conditions immediately to help expedite restoration. Customers should report any trees, damage or hazardous conditions at all times to allow for proactive maintenance that helps avoid outages.

Once weather conditions have exceeded moderate fire danger levels, KPUD will notify customers in the affected area of the altered recloser devices status and the potential for extended outage times.

To ensure these notifications are received, verify your contact and mailing information with KPUD. Do so by accessing your account on SmartHub, in the app or online portal, or by contacting customer service at 800-548-8357. ■