

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
15th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
BRYAN SANDLIN

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



APPROPRIATIONS
CAPITAL BUDGET
CONSUMER PROTECTION &
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Received
Records Management
Nov 8, 2024

U-210254

October 28, 2024

David Danner, Chair
Ann Rendahl, Commissioner
Milt Doumit, Commissioner
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
621 Woodland Square Loop SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Dear Chairman Danner and Commissioners Rendahl and Doumit,

I am writing to you today to express my concern for the wildfire mitigation policy among power companies delivering electricity to customers in Eastern Washington, which is under your review.

As you review the mitigation policy for Pacific Power, please know that on June 16 Pacific Power shut off the power in Sunnyside, Granger, Zillah, Toppenish and Wapato to mitigate the circumstances of a fire on Rattlesnake Ridge, located north and east of my house in Zillah.

Prevailing winds that day were from the southwest and moved the fire to the northeast. Many fire prevention workers from around the valley, along with air support from DNR, worked to control the fire.

I, and a neighbor, worked on tractors to make a fire break on the southern boundary of the fire. The fire posed no imminent danger in any imaginable way to the towns of Sunnyside, Granger, Zillah, Toppenish or Wapato.

Please review the decision process used by Pacific Power to disconnect power for these communities, businesses, and homes under these circumstances.

The particular decision they made on June 16 was an absolute failure by Pacific Power to communicate with local responders and fire prevention personnel on mitigating the circumstances of such an event.

Page two

What the wildfire mitigation team from Pacific Power considered an inconvenience can be quantified and proved to be much greater than that on that day. Shutting off the power caused loss of proceeds in the cherry business, loss of equipment used in hospitals (due to a power surge when power was returned) and immeasurable loss and inconvenience for local residents. In addition, travelers passing through the valley suffered because the power was off at the gas stations, creating long back up lines at the gas pumps through the valley.

I hope that you will help Pacific Power resolve the flaw in their decision-making process.

Sincerely,



Representative Bryan Sandlin
15th Legislative District

cc: Pacific Power Wildfire Mitigation Team