

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DOCKET UE-240006

EXH. DRH-4

DAVID R. HOWELL

REPRESENTING AVISTA CORPORATION

**AVISTA’S WILDFIRE RESILIENCY PLAN**  
**2023 Communications Plan**

**Overview**

In June 2020, Avista launched a comprehensive 10-year Wildfire Resiliency Plan. Initial communications focused on the launch, detailing the main elements of the plan, the work that went into it and how the Company would be rolling it out.

In the following years, communications have shifted to supporting specific initiatives in the plan, partnering with DNR to promote its preparedness outreach in communities and educating customers on Avista’s wildfire resiliency efforts.

The 2023 communications plan builds on the last three years of Wildfire Resiliency communications plans. The scope of this plan is broad communications to customers about Avista’s wildfire resiliency work and direct customer communications regarding work or events that may impact them. It does not include communication between Avista staff and first responders or community outreach led by the Regional Business Manager or Wildfire Resiliency Teams but includes support for those efforts.

**Objectives**

We aim to partner with our customers in preparing for and preventing wildfire while also reinforcing our main communications objectives and:

- Build awareness among all key stakeholders of the significant actions and investment Avista is taking to prevent or mitigate the risk of wildfires.
- Instill confidence in Avista as a proactive and responsible corporate citizen.
- Demonstrate Avista’s focus on prioritizing the safety and well-being of its customers and the communities it serves.
- Provide examples of the Wildfire Resiliency Plan in action and show progress as it is implemented.
- Engage customers in programs that impact them and their communities.
- Promote preparedness for potential outages.

The Wildfire Resiliency Plan identified four main components—Grid Hardening, Vegetation Management, Situational Awareness and Operational Readiness. We continue to support each of these elements, highlighting projects in each area as proof points of Avista’s plan in action.

**General Awareness and Customer Preparedness**

- Continue to reinforce key messages of Avista’s Wildfire Resiliency Plan and remind customers of the significant actions and investment Avista is taking.
- Promote wildfire readiness and amplify messages of our partners (DNR, IDL, Firewise, etc.)

Tactic	Timing/Details
--------	----------------

Customer Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June – September - Connect and e-Connect articles giving an update on the plan and information about outreach events.</li> <li>• June/July - Customer email about wildfire, depending on when we enter Fire Safety Mode</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May/June- Update myavista.com/wildfire with information preparedness, new initiatives and more resources.</li> </ul>
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June – Internal article updating on elements of the plan.</li> <li>• Information included in all-employee meetings.</li> </ul>
RBM and AE Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May – August - Targeted articles to business and community leader audience.</li> </ul>
Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring-Summer – Advertising in the WUI areas that focuses on preparedness message to customers.</li> <li>• Translated into Spanish and run in Spanish speaking media.</li> </ul>
Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update PPT deck created in 2022 with new information for Regional Business Managers.</li> <li>• Support RBM efforts to conduct series of meetings and telephone town halls</li> <li>• Telephone town halls available in Spanish.</li> </ul>

**Vegetation Management – Right Tree, Right Place, Fuel Reduction, Safe Tree**

- As part of Avista’s Wildfire Resiliency Plan, Avista is elevating its approach to vegetation management, particularly in targeted, high risk geographic areas, to further reduce the risk of trees making contact with electrical lines.
- Electric customers in high risk areas (WUI Tier 2-3) may be eligible for a program where Avista will remove and replace incompatible trees with low growing, compatible species. In 2022, we named this program Safe Tree, and it has expanded to several counties.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Timing/Details</b>
Customer Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted outreach to customers identified who qualify for program.</li> <li>• Additional follow-up outreach from program.</li> <li>• Created “Safe Tree” program that included postcards and emails to eligible customers along with web form.</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on Right Tree, Right Place webpages. Note: Right Tree, Right Place has its own communications plan.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorten videos created for website and social.</li> </ul>
Avista-Owned Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success stories from pilot program shared on Connect blog, possible Connections article, social media posts.</li> </ul>

**Operational Awareness – Fire Safety Mode and PSPS**

- Avista has traditionally alerted all customers when we enter Dry Land Mode (now Fire Safety Mode), explaining that they may experience longer outages during this time period. An email and press release will be sent after Avista enters Fire Safety Mode.
- Operations has identified different levels of Fire Safety Mode—Base, Elevated and Extreme.
  - Base Level – during fire season, specific circuits, selected based upon potential fire risk, are reconfigured to allow a single automatic reclose. Fault energy varies from 10-55%.
  - Elevated – based on fire-weather conditions, individual circuits, are reconfigured to retain a single reclose attempt but prevents fuses from blowing. Fault energy varies from 10-20%.
  - Extreme – based on fire-weather conditions, individual circuits are reconfigured to eliminate automatic reclosing. Fault energy fixed at 10%.
- As the modes progress, the likelihood of longer outages increases, if a fault were to occur. None of the options include preemptively deenergizing lines as is traditionally understood a Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). We may turn off lines in an event where emergency responders have requested.
- Due to the increasing risk of wildfire and what Avista has learned from our industry peers, we are in the process of developing the criteria and customer support necessary to implement Public Safety Power Shutoffs if it is deemed a prudent measure to protect our customers and communities.
- We have developed messaging around PSPS and future plans to develop it as part of our wildfire resiliency plan.
- To adequately prepare for a PSPS program, Avista is talking to customers and communities in 2023 to begin that work and develop plans that reflect the needs of our communities.

Tactic	Timing/Details
Customer Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted communication to customers on specific circuits that are impacted. Some will have a message similar to previous years while others will be more specific with preparedness messages.</li> <li>• More messaging needs to be developed along with process— How is it initiated, what gets sent to customers and through what channels (e.g. email, IVR)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify customers if impacted by active event and Avista has been asked to turn off power for the safety of emergency responders. (Email, IVR)</li> </ul>
Press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcing the start of Fire Safe Mode operations with updated changes. Likely July but depends on weather.</li> </ul>
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tabletop exercise to prepare for Elevated and Extreme modes of operation in May.</li> </ul>
RBM support/Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update graphics created last year to reflect the name change and additional edits.</li> <li>Develop PSPS messaging as we work toward adding it as part of the wildfire resiliency plan in the future.</li> </ul>
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create short videos on Fire Safety Mode and the Fire-Weather Dashboard.</li> <li>Distribute videos on Avista-owned channels and to customers.</li> <li>Have subtitles in multiple languages.</li> </ul>

**Grid Hardening**

- As grid hardening projects continue throughout our service territory, we are working with that team to notify customers who will be impacted by the work and reinforce why we are doing it.
- Grid hardening projects offer a tangible example of how Avista is investing in its wildfire plan.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Timing/Details</b>
Customer Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March – December, Postcards alerting customers of work that is happening in their area. To be mailed within two weeks of work for each project.</li> </ul>
Earned Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As appropriate, actively pitch media stories about grid hardening and wildfire resiliency as work happens in an area</li> </ul>
Avista-Owned Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As appropriate and available, stories, like wood-to-steel transmission upgrades, can be used on our own channels like Connect, Connections and social media.</li> </ul>