

**Representative Carl R. Albrecht** proposes the following substitute bill:

**WILDLAND FIRE PLANNING AND COST RECOVERY**

**AMENDMENTS**

2020 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Carl R. Albrecht**

Senate Sponsor: Scott D. Sandall

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill enacts and modifies provisions relating to wildland fire planning and cost recovery.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ grants the Public Service Commission rulemaking authority to enact rules establishing procedures for the review and approval of a wildland fire protection plan;
- ▶ requires a qualified utility or an electric cooperative to prepare and submit for approval a wildland fire protection plan;
- ▶ specifies the information that is required to be included in a wildland fire protection plan;
- ▶ requires the Public Service Commission to review and approve a wildland fire protection plan submitted by a qualified utility;
- ▶ provides that a qualified utility may recover, through rates, the capital investments and expenses incurred to implement a wildland fire protection plan;
- ▶ requires a qualified utility to annually report certain capital investments and



26 expenses incurred for the implementation of a wildland fire protection plan to the Public  
27 Service Commission;

28       ▶ requires a governing authority of an electric cooperative to review and approve a  
29 wildland fire protection plan submitted by an electric cooperative;

30       ▶ provides that a qualified utility or an electric cooperative with an electrical  
31 transmission fire protection plan are not considered to have negligently, recklessly,  
32 or intentionally caused a wildland fire under certain circumstances;

33       ▶ amends the standard of care for a right of action for injuries to trees;

34       ▶ specifies the liability provisions that apply for damages arising from a wildland fire;

35 and

36       ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

37 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

38       None

39 **Other Special Clauses:**

40       None

41 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

42 AMENDS:

43       **65A-3-4**, as repealed and reenacted by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapter 361

44       **78B-6-1002**, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 3

45 ENACTS:

46       **54-24-101**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

47       **54-24-102**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

48       **54-24-103**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

49       **54-24-201**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

50       **54-24-202**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

51       **54-24-203**, Utah Code Annotated 1953



53 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

54       Section 1. Section **54-24-101** is enacted to read:

55               **CHAPTER 24. WILDLAND FIRE PLANNING AND COST RECOVERY ACT**

56                               **Part 1. General Provisions**

57 **54-24-101. Title.**

58 This chapter is known as the "Wildland Fire Planning and Cost Recovery Act."

59 Section 2. Section **54-24-102** is enacted to read:

60 **54-24-102. Definitions.**

61 As used in this chapter:

62 (1) "Electric cooperative" means an electrical corporation that is a:

63 (a) distribution electrical cooperative; or

64 (b) wholesale electrical cooperative.

65 (2) "Governing authority" means the same as that term is defined in Section [54-15-102](#).

66 (3) "Qualified utility" means the same as that term is defined in Section [54-17-801](#).

67 (4) "Wildland fire protection plan" means a plan submitted to the commission or

68 governing authority in accordance with the requirements of this chapter.

69 Section 3. Section **54-24-103** is enacted to read:

70 **54-24-103. Commission rulemaking authority.**

71 In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the

72 commission shall make rules to implement this chapter, including:

73 (1) rules establishing procedures for the review and approval of a wildland fire

74 protection plan;

75 (2) rules establishing the procedures for the review and approval of annual

76 expenditures for the implementation of a wildland fire protection plan; and

77 (3) any other rules that the commission determines are necessary to protect the public

78 interest and implement this chapter.

79 Section 4. Section **54-24-201** is enacted to read:

80 **Part 2. Wildland Fire Protection Plans**

81 **54-24-201. Wildland fire protection plan for a qualified utility.**

82 (1) A qualified utility shall prepare a wildland fire protection plan in accordance with

83 the requirements of this chapter.

84 (2) A wildland fire protection plan under Subsection (1) shall include:

85 (a) a description of areas within the service territory of the qualified utility that may be

86 subject to a heightened risk of wildland fire;

87 (b) a description of the procedures, standards, and time frames that the qualified utility

88 will use to inspect and operate its infrastructure;

89 (c) a description of the procedures and standards that the qualified utility will use to  
90 perform vegetation management;

91 (d) a description of proposed modifications or upgrades to facilities and preventative  
92 programs that the qualified utility will implement to reduce the risk of its electric facilities  
93 initiating a wildland fire;

94 (e) a description of procedures for de-energizing power lines and disabling reclosers to  
95 mitigate potential wildland fires taking into consideration:

96 (i) the ability of the qualified utility to reasonably access the proposed power line to be  
97 de-energized;

98 (ii) the balance of the risk of wildland fire with the need for continued supply of  
99 electricity to a community; and

100 (iii) any potential impact to public safety, first responders, and health and  
101 communication infrastructure;

102 (f) a description of the procedures the qualified utility intends to use to restore its  
103 electrical system in the event of a wildland fire;

104 (g) a description of the costs for the implementation of the plan, including system  
105 improvements and upgrades;

106 (h) a description of community outreach and public awareness efforts before and  
107 during a wildland fire season; and

108 (i) a description of potential participation, if applicable, with state or local wildland fire  
109 protection plans.

110 (3) (a) A qualified utility shall submit the wildland fire protection plan described in this  
111 section to the commission:

112 (i) on or before June 1, 2020; and

113 (ii) on or before October 1 of every third year after calendar year 2020.

114 (b) The commission shall:

115 (i) review the plan submitted under Subsection (3)(a); and

116 (ii) consider input from:

117 (A) the State Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands; and

118 (B) any other appropriate federal, state, or local entity.

119 (c) The commission shall approve a wildland fire protection plan submitted under  
120 Subsection (3)(a) if the plan:

121 (i) is reasonable and in the public interest; and

122 (ii) appropriately balances the costs of implementing the plan with the risk of a  
123 potential wildland fire.

124 Section 5. Section **54-24-202** is enacted to read:

125 **54-24-202. Cost recovery for wildland fire protection plan implementation.**

126 (1) A qualified utility shall recover in rates all prudently incurred investments and  
127 expenditures, including the costs of capital, made to implement an approved wildland fire  
128 protection plan.

129 (2) A qualified utility shall file an annual report to the commission identifying the  
130 actual capital investments and expenses made in the prior calendar year and a forecast of the  
131 capital investments and expenses for the present year to implement a wildland fire protection  
132 plan approved by the commission under Section [54-23-201](#).

133 (3) The commission shall authorize the deferral and collection of the incremental  
134 revenue requirement for the capital investments and expenses:

135 (a) to implement an approved wildland fire protection plan; and

136 (b) not included in base rates.

137 Section 6. Section **54-24-203** is enacted to read:

138 **54-24-203. Wildland fire protection plan for an electric cooperative.**

139 (1) An electric cooperative shall prepare a wildland fire protection plan in accordance  
140 with the requirements of this chapter.

141 (2) A wildland fire protection plan under Subsection (1) shall include:

142 (a) a description of areas within the service territory of the electric cooperative that  
143 may be subject to a heightened risk of wildland fire;

144 (b) a description of the procedures, standards, and time frames that the electric  
145 cooperative will use to inspect and operate its infrastructure;

146 (c) a description of the procedures and standards that the electric cooperative will use  
147 to perform vegetation management;

148 (d) a description of proposed modifications or upgrades to facilities and preventative  
149 programs that the electric cooperative will implement to reduce the risk of its electric facilities

150 initiating a wildland fire;

151 (e) a description of procedures for de-energizing power lines and disabling reclosers to  
152 mitigate potential wildland fires, taking into consideration:

153 (i) the ability of the electric cooperative to reasonably access the proposed power line  
154 to be de-energized;

155 (ii) the balance of the risk of wildland fire with the need for continued supply of  
156 electricity to a community; and

157 (iii) any potential impact to public safety, first responders, and health and  
158 communication infrastructure;

159 (f) a description of the procedures the electric cooperative intends to use to restore its  
160 electrical system in the event of a wildland fire; and

161 (g) a description of potential consultation, if applicable, with state or local wildland fire  
162 protection plans.

163 (3) (a) An electric cooperative shall submit the wildland fire protection plan described  
164 in this section to its governing authority:

165 (i) on or before June 1, 2020; and

166 (ii) on or before October 1 of every third year after calendar year 2020.

167 (b) The governing authority shall:

168 (i) review the plan submitted under Subsection (3)(a); and

169 (ii) consider input from:

170 (A) the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands created in Section [65A-1-4](#); and

171 (B) any other appropriate federal, state, or local entity.

172 (c) The governing authority shall approve a wildland fire protection plan submitted  
173 under Subsection (3)(a) if the plan:

174 (i) is reasonable and in the interest of the electric cooperative members; and

175 (ii) appropriately balances the costs of implementing the plan with the risk of a  
176 potential wildland fire.

177 (d) (i) An electric cooperative shall file a wildland fire protection plan prepared and  
178 submitted under this section with the commission.

179 (ii) The commission shall make a wildland fire protection plan filed under Subsection  
180 (3)(d)(i) available for public inspection.

181 Section 7. Section 65A-3-4 is amended to read:

182 **65A-3-4. Liability for causing wildland fires.**

183 (a) "Electric cooperative" means the same as that term is defined in Section 54-24-102.

184 (b) "Electrical transmission wildland fire protection plan" means a wildland fire

185 protection plan, as defined in Section 54-24-102, that is:

186 (i) prepared and submitted by a qualified utility and approved as provided in Section  
187 54-24-201; or

188 (ii) prepared and submitted by an electric cooperative and approved as provided in  
189 Section 54-24-203.

190 (c) "Qualified utility" means the same as that term is defined in Section 54-17-801.

191 ~~[(H)-A]~~ (2) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), a person who negligently,  
192 recklessly, or intentionally causes or spreads a wildland fire shall be liable for the cost of  
193 suppressing that wildland fire, regardless of whether the fire begins on:

194 ~~[(a)]~~ (i) private land;

195 ~~[(b)]~~ (ii) land owned by the state;

196 ~~[(c)]~~ (iii) federal land; or

197 ~~[(d)]~~ (iv) tribal land.

198 (b) A qualified utility or electric cooperative may not be considered to have negligently  
199 caused a wildland fire if:

200 (i) (A) the electrical transmission wildland fire protection plan of the qualified utility or  
201 electric cooperative identifies and addresses the cause of the wildland fire for fire mitigation  
202 purposes; and

203 (B) at the origin of the wildland fire, the qualified utility or electric cooperative has  
204 completed the fire mitigation work identified in the electrical transmission wildland fire  
205 protection plan, including inspection, maintenance, and repair activities, modifications or  
206 upgrades to facilities or construction of new facilities, vegetation management work, and  
207 preventative programs; or

208 (ii) (A) the qualified utility or electric cooperative is denied or delayed access to a  
209 right-of-way on land owned by the state, a federal agency, or a tribal government after the  
210 qualified utility or electric cooperative requests access to the right-of-way to perform  
211 vegetation management or fire mitigation work in accordance with an electrical transmission

212 wildland fire protection plan; and

213 (B) the electrical transmission wildland fire protection plan identifies and addresses the  
214 cause of the wildland fire for fire mitigation purposes.

215 ~~[(2)]~~ (3) The conduct described in Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2) includes any negligent, reckless,  
216 or intentional conduct, and is not limited to conduct described in Section 65A-3-2.

217 ~~[(3)]~~ (4) A person who incurs costs to suppress a wildland fire may bring an action  
218 under this section to recover those costs.

219 (5) (a) A property owner who suffers damages resulting from a wildland fire may bring  
220 an action under this section to recover those damages.

221 (b) An award of damages to a real property resulting from a wildland fire, including the  
222 loss of vegetation, shall be the lesser of:

223 (i) the cost to restore the real property to its pre-wildland fire condition; or

224 (ii) the difference between:

225 (A) the fair market value of the real property before the wildland fire; and

226 (B) the fair market value of the real property after the wildland fire.

227 ~~[(4)]~~ (6) A person who suffers damage from a wildland fire may pursue all other legal  
228 remedies in addition to seeking damages under Subsection ~~[(3)]~~ (4) or (5).

229 Section 8. Section **78B-6-1002** is amended to read:

230 **78B-6-1002. Right of action for injuries to trees -- Damage.**

231 ~~[Any]~~ (1) Except as provided in Subsection (2), any person who, without authority,  
232 willfully or intentionally cuts down or carries off any wood or underwood, tree or timber, or  
233 girdles or otherwise willfully or intentionally injures any tree or timber on the land of another  
234 person, or on the street or highway in front of any person's house, town or city lot, or cultivated  
235 grounds, or on the commons or public grounds of any city or town, or on the street or highway  
236 in front, without lawful authority, is liable to the owner of such land, or to the city or town, for  
237 treble the amount of damages which may be assessed in a civil action.

238 (2) (a) The provisions of this section do not apply to injuries to a tree or timber on the  
239 land of another arising from a wildland fire.

240 (b) Liability for injuries to a tree or timber on the land of another arising from a  
241 wildland fire is determined in accordance with Section 65A-3-4.