


# Attachments to Testimony of Ralph Bloemers Power line ignitions & the Labor Day Fires



# Local Fire Department Warning from Sept 6

Gates Rural fire Protection Distr X +

https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Government-Organization/Gates-Rural-fire-Protection-District-17




**Gates Rural fire Protection District**


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**Red Flag Warning**  
Monday 11AM - Wednesday 5PM



**High Wind Warning**  
Monday 5PM - Tuesday 1PM



**Red Flag Warning**  
All of NW Oregon & SW Washington  
Relative Humidity below 15% &  
**strong** easterly winds



**High Wind Warning**  
N. Oregon Coast & Coast Range  
**15-25 mph** Gusts up to **45 mph**  
Gusts up to **60 mph** possible on higher terrain

N. Oregon/S. Washington Cascades & Foothills  
**20-35 mph** Gusts up to **50 mph**  
Gusts up to **75 mph** possible on higher exposed terrain

**US National Weather Service Portland Oregon** ✓  
September 6

Warm, dry and VERY windy conditions are expected throughout NW Oregon and SW Washington. Just how windy? Well...if you're at higher terrain (especially through the Cascades) you could see gusts around 60+ mph. There is also a chance that the Portland-Metro area could see gusts anywhere from 45-50 mph.

Red Flag Warnings are also out for most places Eugene north and west of the Cascades. So remember as Smokey Bear says "Only YOU can prevent forest fires".

Learn more about the High Wind and Red Flag Warnings at [www.weather.gov/portland](http://www.weather.gov/portland)

1 2 Comments 1 Share

# Multiple Warnings - Foreseeable & Preventable

RED FLAG WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM NOON TODAY TO 11 PM PDT THIS EVENING FOR STRONG GUSTY WIND WITH LOW RH... ..RED FLAG WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM 10 AM TUESDAY TO MIDNIGHT PDT TUESDAY NIGHT FOR STRONG GUSTY WIND WITH LOW RH... \* Impacts: Strong, gusty wind with low relative humidity and high fire danger will likely contribute to a significant spread of new and existing fires. \* Affected area: In Northern CA, all of Fire Zones 284 and 285. In South Central OR, all of Fire Zones 624 and 625. \* Wind: Northeast 20 to 30 mph with gusts up to 50 mph. \* Humidity: As low as 8 percent. \* One less spark, one less wildfire. \* View the hazard area in detail at: <https://www.wrh.nasa.gov/mfr/HAZARD>

**Updated Fire Weather Watch for the Coastal zone: URGENT - FIRE WEATHER MESSAGE - RED FLAG WARNING for Monday 9/7/20 through 9/8/20**



**Pacific Power OR**   
@PacificPower OR



High winds are forecast for later today in many parts of our area. For storm ready tips, visit us at [pacificpower.net/prepare](https://pacificpower.net/prepare)



**NWS Portland**  @NWSPortland

So... everything looks to be on track for an eventful 24-48 hours of weather, starting this afternoon.

A question we've seen a lot of is, "When will the east winds hit?" The answer is complicated. (1/3)...

9:09 AM · Sep 7, 2020



5



See Pacific Power OR's other T...

At 10:11 a.m. Sept. 7, Consumers Power posted on Twitter that it would be operating "under extreme fire condition protocols," citing the forecast for high winds and high temperatures.



**Consumers Power Inc**  
@ConsumersPower



The @NWS has forecast high temps with high winds over the next 3 days. CPI's system will operate under extreme fire condition protocols. Please prepare for the possibility of longer than normal power interruptions. For more preparedness info please visit [cpi.coop/safety/outage-...](https://cpi.coop/safety/outage-...)

10:11 AM · Sep 7, 2020

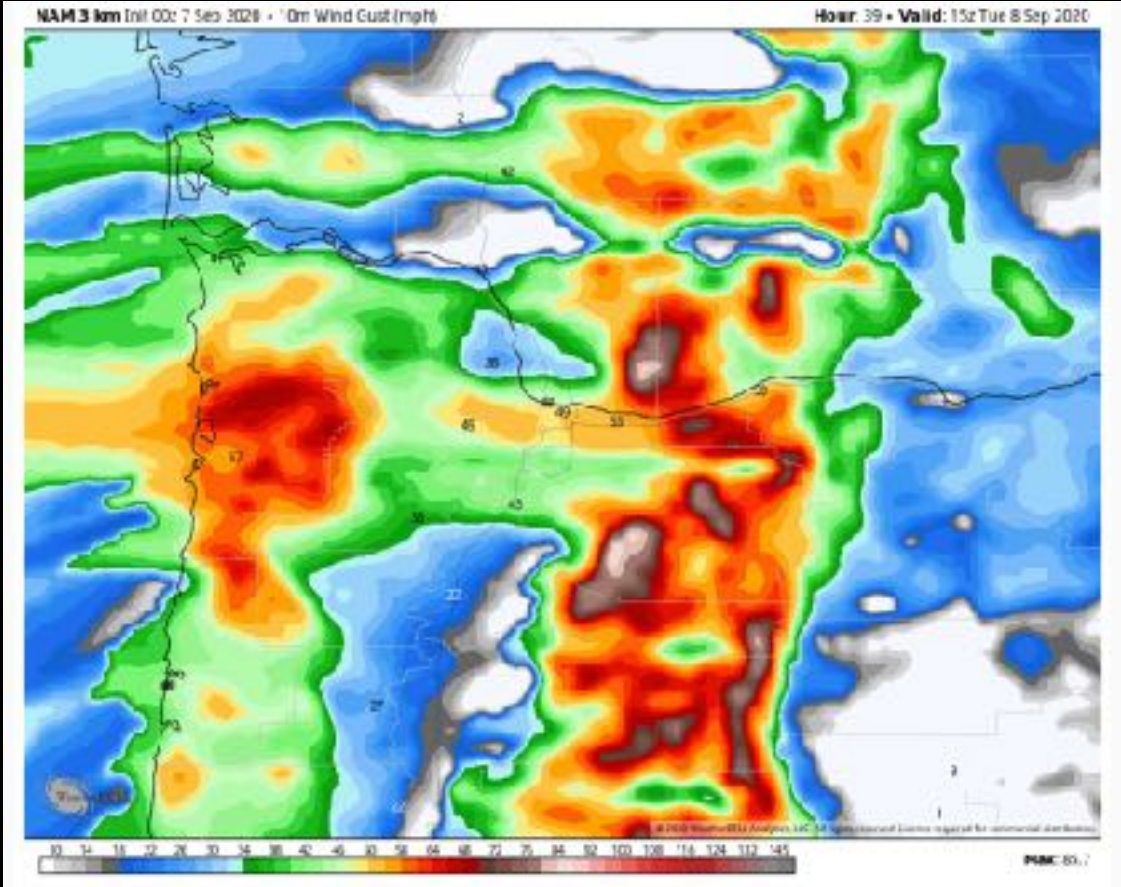


1



See Consumers Power Inc's oth...

# East Wind Event - Red Flag Warning = High Winds



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

# RED FLAG WARNING



# Meteorologists issued multiple warnings

< Matt Zaffino's Post ...

 **Matt Zaffino**  is with **Carol Veatch**. 

Sep 7, 2020 · 🌐

Portland, and all of NW Oregon and SW Washington, we're about to experience a historic wind event for this time of year. Strong east winds will develop Monday, and peak late Monday night and Tuesday morning. The map here is valid at 8 am Tuesday. Notice the gusts in the Portland area over 40 mph. Also check the max gust on the map, that's the number in the lower right had corner. Over 80 mph! That will be in the Cascade foothills.

A couple things to keep in mind. First, the strong winds will extend over a relatively long period of time, about 24 hours.

< Matt Zaffino's Post ...

The winds themselves will likely be strong enough and persistent enough to bring down limbs or even whole trees. This of course may create widespread power outages, especially since the trees are still fully leafed out. That means there's more surface area for the wind to push on. We also haven't had a major wind storm in a few years, which means there are potentially a lot of trees and limbs ripe for the picking.

So power outages are a major concern with this wind storm.

# “risk of rapid and dangerous wildfire spread, ANYWHERE in northwest Oregon and SW Washington...”

But, there is also the risk of rapid and dangerous wildfire spread, ANYWHERE in northwest Oregon and SW Washington, including in Portland and every other city and town in the area. Remember, we've seen this before. The fires on the bluff in North Portland threatened homes and that was with WITHOUT a record wind event.

The Eagle Creek Fire began Labor Day weekend in 2017, and spread 20 miles overnight, fueled by strong east winds.

This wind storm will be far stronger than that windstorm.

And think about some of the devastating fires in California. Strong east winds fueled the Oakland Hills fire, among others. And this can absolutely happen here.

PGE is considering doing something they've never done before: pre-emptive power outages to de-energize the power lines, to try to prevent electrical fires from starting. Because any fire that starts in these extreme conditions will quickly grow out of control, spread incredibly quickly, and be very difficult to stop.

NW Oregon and SW Washington are under a High Wind Warning from 5 pm Monday until 1 pm Tuesday. Gusts will reach at least 40 mph, with some as high as 60 mph in the West Hills and near the Gorge.

But this is not just a Gorge windstorm. Our entire region will be subjected to strong, hot and very dry winds.

# PGE saw it coming and took action

## PGE warns customers to brace for possible power cuts on Mount Hood



By **Courtney Sherwood** (OPB)

Sept. 6, 2020 2:54 p.m.

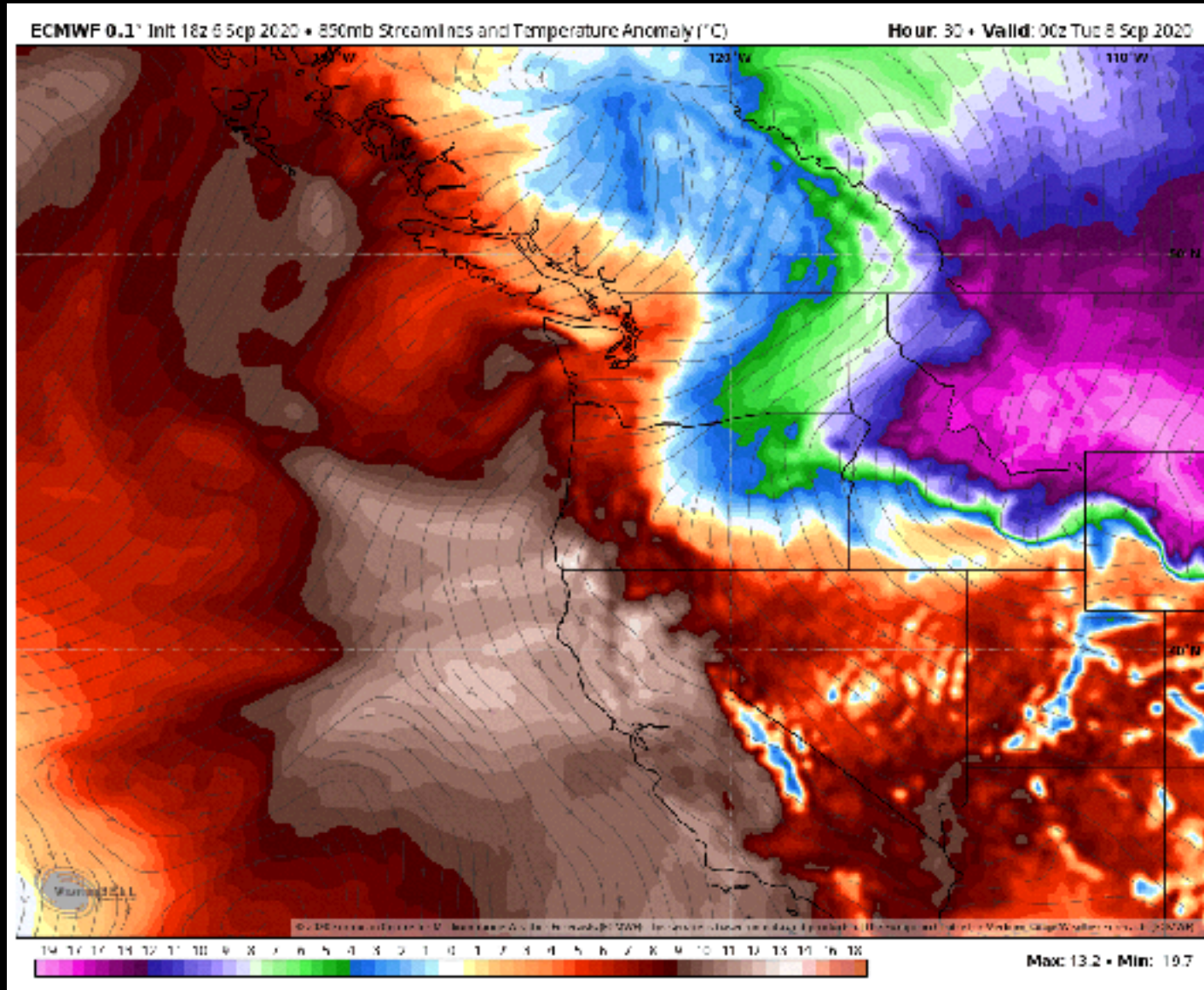
The power company is considering turning the lights off to prevent high winds from downing power lines and sparking fires in extremely dry forests.

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

## PGE shuts off power near Mt. Hood due to fire danger

*The outage impacts roughly 5,000 customers*

# Rapid decrease in humidity, temp increase, leading to rapid rate of fire spread





# Pearl Hill Fire in WA ignited approximately 15 hours before power lines ignited in Santiam Canyon



# Malden, WA burned at least 6 hours before power lines ignited in Santiam Canyon



The screenshot shows the InciWeb interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search incidents and states". Below the search bar is a map of the fire area, highlighted in red. The map includes labels for "Tuck Lake" and "Columbia River". To the right of the map are several icons: a gear for settings, a funnel for filters, a location pin, and a refresh icon. Below the map, there is a "Show Legend" button and a small text snippet "BSP Canada; ES1, HERS, GAR...".

## Babb-Malden/Manning Fires

Unit Information

Southeast Region - Department of Natural Resources  
Washington  
Ellensburg, WA 98926





Powerline ignition - Lyons - around 6:50 pm



# Powerline ignition - Gates Bridge East



# Gates School - Powerline ignition around 10 pm



# Local Confirmation of Power line ignitions



**Jeff Shepherd**

This is 100% true. My uncle's property borders the school and you can walk around the fence line and see the proof. That entire fence was electrified.

1w Like



**John Parmenter**

i was in gates tuesday morning the day after the fire grew. this is no joke. spot fire started up all over town. all they had time to fight was for the fire house. and let e tell you, them boys were in bad shape tuesday morning. now, 3 weeks later. i hope they got a break. well done team!

3d Like



**Joe Paschall**

The fires through Gates were without a doubt spread further and faster due to downed power lines. We likely lost our house from fires started from downed power lines. This has been confirmed from multiple eye witnesses including the mayor of Gates and multiple firefighters. Had the power company actually done their job and turned off the power when they knew their would be extremely high winds, then a lot of people would still have their home.

11h Like



Live power lines burned into Railroad Avenue, and on Highway 22 in Gates, photo on right shows replaced power pole with new tag in background





Fire on side of road outside Mill City as  
people evacuated down Highway 22



Fires ignited by power lines were burning further down canyon and west of Gates and Mill City as people evacuated



West of Gates - Fires were started by Power lines and documented by people as they fled.



Mad Creek Road in Gates - People had less than 15 minutes warning to evacuate. When they called 911 between 8-10 pm on Labor Day to report new fires, dispatch told them that resources were not available and to evacuate



Labor Day - Local ignitions started homes and outbuildings on fire. Gates lacked adequate resources, as multiple power line ignitions in the same short span of time overwhelmed the town. People were left with a choice - stay and defend their homes or flee.



The owner of this home reported transformers exploding as he fled.



# Incident Report confirmed power line ignitions



Brian Gales, Incident Commander, NWIMT13

Les Hallman, Incident Commander, OSFM

<b>Start date: Aug, 16, 2020</b>	<b>Location: Opal Creek wilderness, 6 mi North of Detroit, OR</b>	<b>Cause: Unknown</b>
<b>Fire size: 159,000 Acres</b>	<b>Helicopters Assigned: 4</b>	<b>Total personnel: 310</b>

## Santiam Fire Update for Wednesday September 9, 2020

**Keizer, Ore.** – Wildland firefighters, working on the Beachie Creek Fire, were forced to evacuate their encampment in Gates, Ore. after several electrical lines and transformers were destroyed in an extreme wind event which began on Monday afternoon. Pacific Team Northwest 13 is currently headquartered at Chemeketa Community College in Salem.

Originally listed at 469 acres, the fire has grown overnight to over 131,000 acres driven by high winds and extremely dry fuels. Originally named the Beachie Creek fire, it has been renamed the Santiam Fire acknowledging that the Beachie Creek Fire no longer was the main cause of rapid fire growth and was instead fed by a series of small fires largely caused by downed power lines and other ignition sources throughout the area.

# Buildings Burned Over Multi-Day Period





# After the Fire - Power lines Down on Highway 22



# After the Fire - Power lines Down in the Canyon



Before a Power line went down at Gates School Road, Incident Team 13 was stationed at the Gates School and the nearby airport.



# Incident Team 13 Command Post overwhelmed by power line fire



Aftermath - Incident Team 13 Command Post wreckage, the power line in the foreground was laying across the cyclone fence.



Aerial photos of Santiam Canyon show lots of green trees



# Mark Nelson's Fox 12 Weather Blog

<https://fox12weather.wordpress.com/historic-september-2020-fires-labor-day-windstorm/>

## Were these fires historic?

You bet! I did some research and it's a bit disturbing. In the past 100 years, we've seen 11 "mega-fires" over and west of the Cascades. 3 in the 1930s, one in the 1940s, then 52 years with none! 2 more in 2002/2017. So **5 OF 11 MEGA-FIRES OVER/WEST OF THE CASCADES IN THE PAST 100 YEARS BURNED IN SEPTEMBER 2020**

1933 Tillamook Burn 240,000

1936 Bandon Fire 287,000

1945 3rd Tillamook Burn 173,000

1939 2nd Tillamook Burn 217,000

2002 Biscuit 500,000

2017 Chetoo Bar 191,125

2020 Riverside 138,000

2020 Beachie Creek 193,000

2020 Lionshead 199,000

2020 Holiday Farm 173,000

2020 Archie Creek 133,000

fox12weather.wordpress.com

## Why did it happen? Climate Change? Mismanaged Forests? Utility Companies?

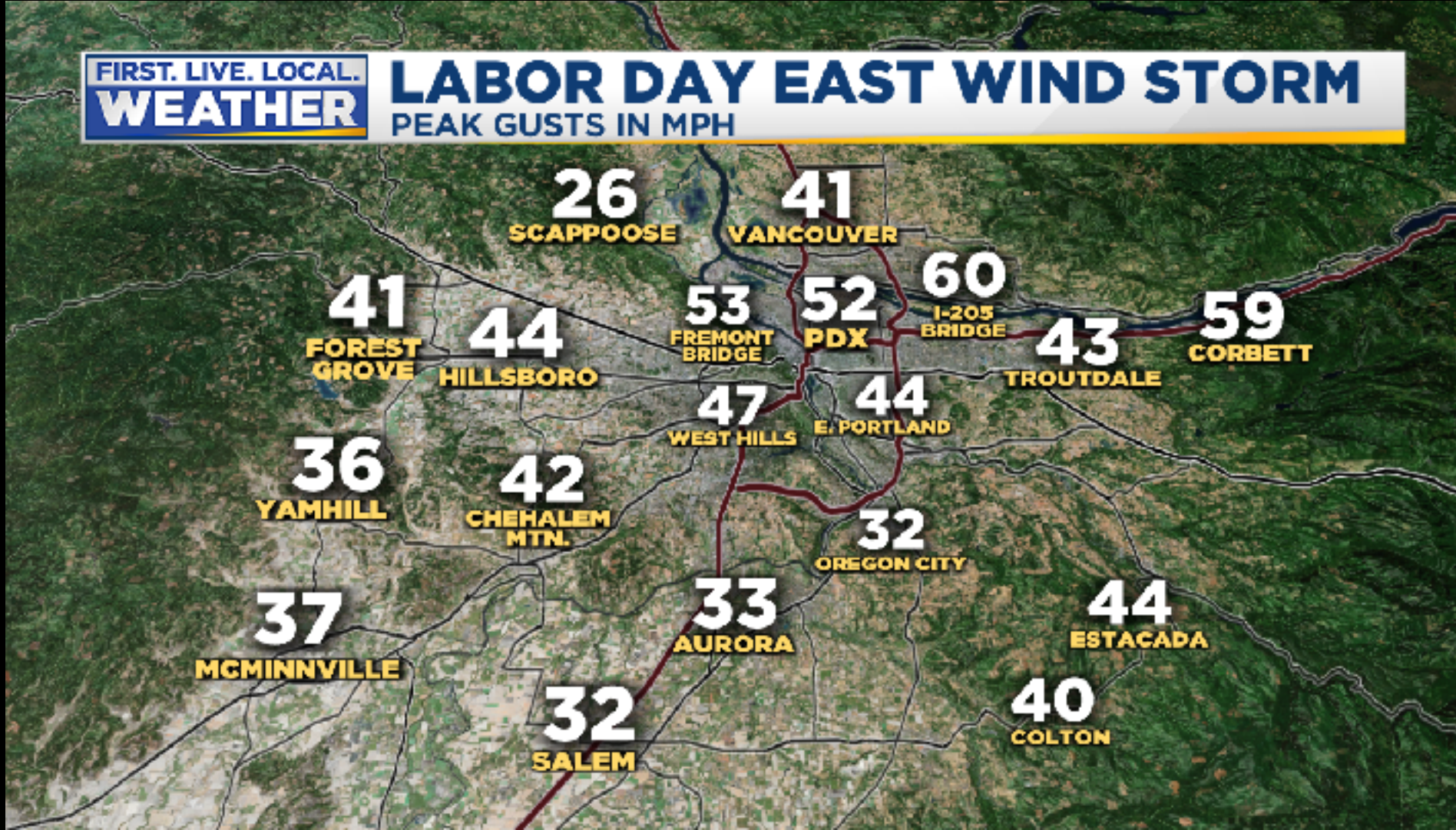
It's a loaded question; my personal opinion is that it was a combination of factors. I'm sure many studies are on the way...

1. The number one factor is what I've already outlined. The most dangerous fire weather pattern showed up at exactly the wrong time. And it happened to be an "extra-extreme" version of that pattern (wind/humidity). Everything lined up just right this year in a very bad way. Even if our climate wasn't warming, at least some of these fires would have exploded out of control.
2. No, they weren't "climate fires", that's silly. But our warming climate likely played a part. But how much? 10-20% responsible? 50%? No one knows right now. Summers (especially July-September) have been warming/drying for several decades. I'm not a forester, but it's safe to assume trees are more stressed & drier than they used to be.
3. Fires have been suppressed for many decades, but we know fires were a natural part of Cascade forests in the past. Pioneers that arrived in the late 1800s probably experienced late summer fire smoke almost every year. Forests west of the Cascades were/are going to burn at some point; either this way or with controlled burns.
4. What part did downed powerlines play? I'm sure we'll be hearing more about this in the future.

# Peak Gusts

FIRST. LIVE. LOCAL.  
**WEATHER**

## LABOR DAY EAST WIND STORM PEAK GUSTS IN MPH





# Peak Gusts and Relative Humidity

Location	Peak Gust	Notes
Timberline Ski Area (7,700')	106 mph	12 hrs w/peak gusts 90+
Hoodoo Ski Area (5,700')	98 mph	
Mt. Hebo (Coast Range)	92 mph	
Horse Creek RAWS (3,400')	66 mph	10 mi. NE Silver Falls SP
Lincoln City (tower in city)	62 mph	Many hrs. missing obs.
Tillamook	52 mph	Wind blew hard all night
Astoria	51 mph	ODOT

The strong wind coming from an unusual direction plus fully leafed out trees led to thousands of power outages. PGE was up to 80,000 customers out at one point. But they did cut power to the Hwy 26 corridor from Sandy to Government Camp around 6pm Labor Day; a very good move since no significant fires started in that area.

Dewpoints, a measure of moisture in the air, dropped to mid-winter values. PDX went as low as 20, Tillamook to 18! By Tuesday afternoon relative humidity was in the high single digits and teens as the easterly wind blew; we were in southern California fire conditions Tuesday & Wednesday, the 8th and 9th



# PacifiCorp faces class action lawsuit for downed power lines that allegedly ignited devastating Oregon wildfires

Updated Oct 01, 2020; Posted Oct 01, 2020



Firefighters attempted and failed to control a fire that destroyed a command camp at the old Gates Elementary School on Labor Day. The fire was ignited when a power line fell on a cyclone fence. (Inciweb)



Tiffany's Post



Caitlin Marie Quarry

[Tiffany Stroud-Carter](#) my husband and I have decided to join the suit against pacific power. The very last phone call I made while grabbing my child and two dogs and running was to emergency services. The transformer in front of our house blew, caught on fire and the trees around it caught on fire. We lived right off the hwy in gates. The firefighters camp caught on fire due to downed lines. My biggest question is how many little fires started that night due to negligence in shutting off the power? I will always wonder what if. What if the power had been shut off? Would my home we spent three years saving for still be there? We had only owned our home for three months and it's all gone. Hadn't fully unpacked so we lost everything We will never

# PacifiCorp could face substantial liability if downed power lines caused Oregon wildfires

Updated on Oct 07, 2020. Published on Oct 04, 2020



193,573 acres



Map: Mark Friesen/staff

Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Interagency Fire Center

131,542 acres

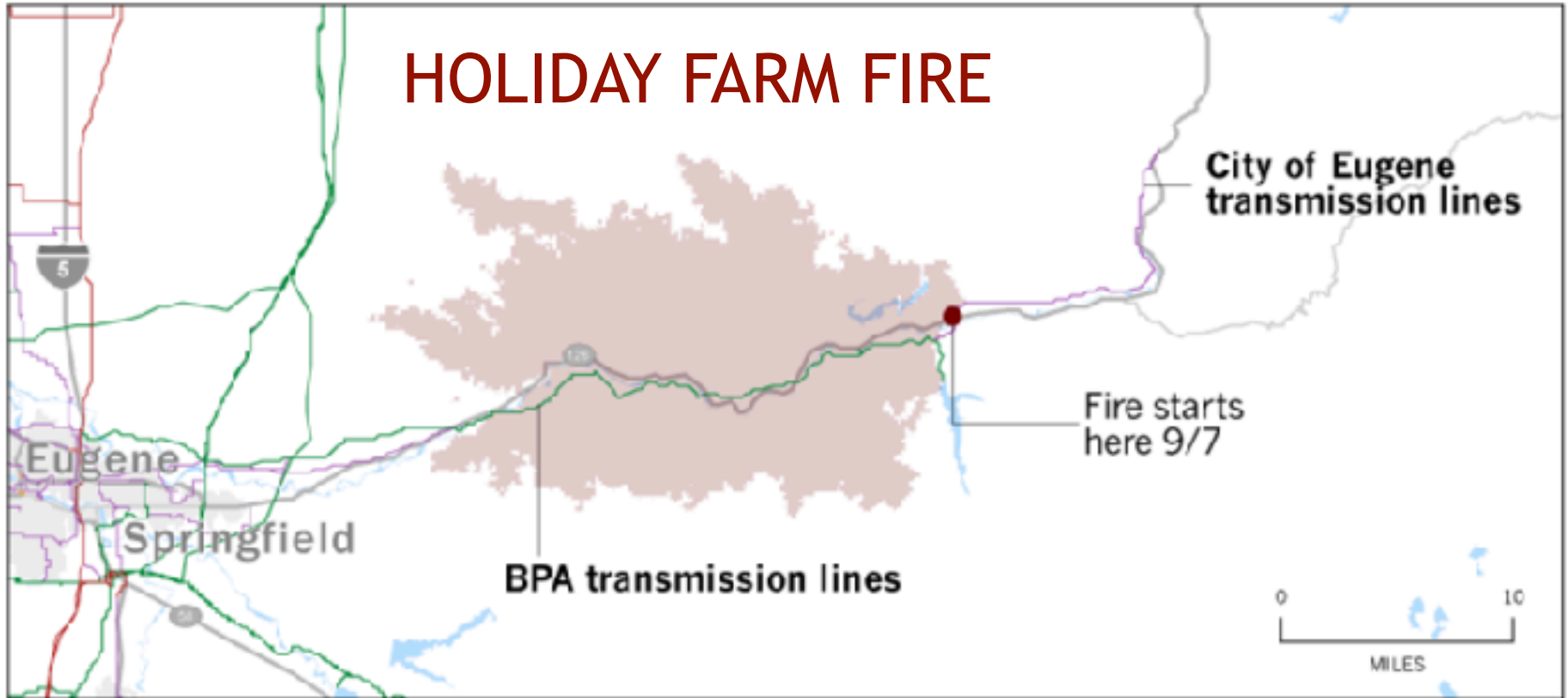


Map: Mark Friesen/staff

Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Interagency Fire Center

173,393 acres

## HOLIDAY FARM FIRE



Map: Mark Friesen/staff

Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Interagency Fire Center

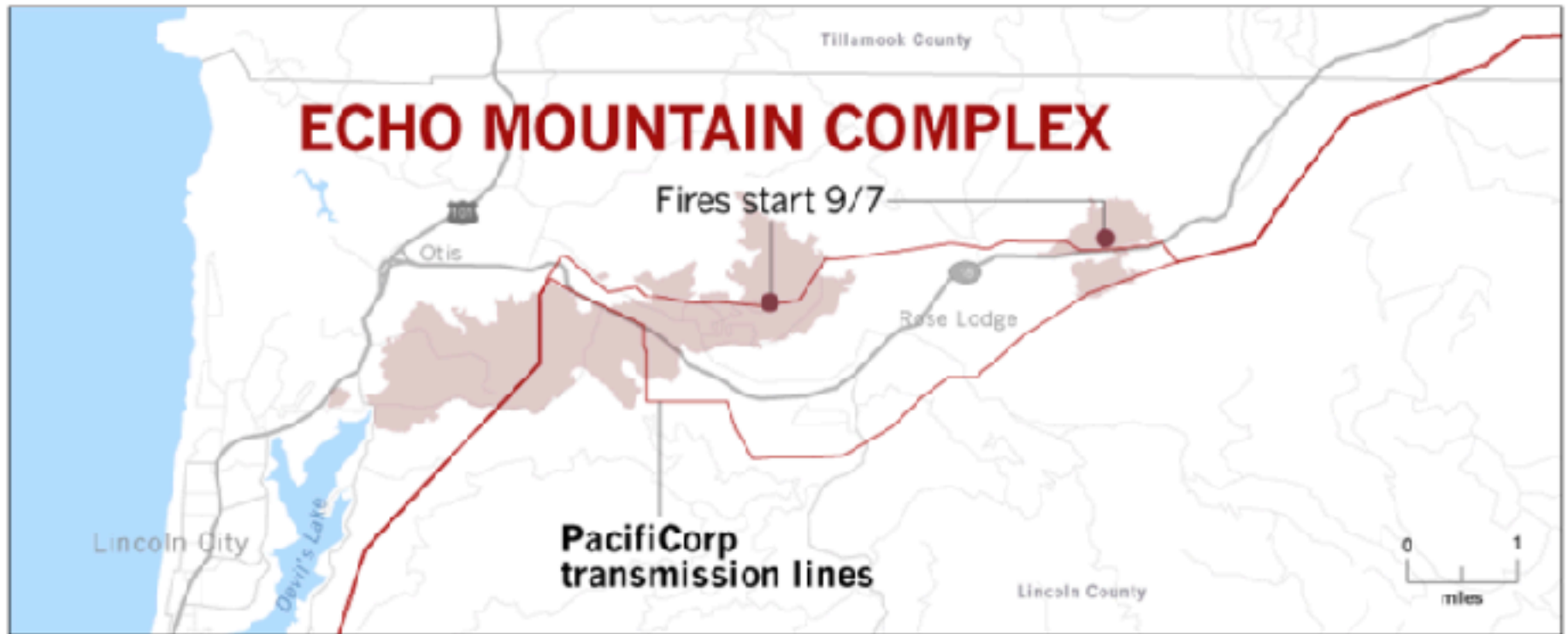
157,229 acres



Map: Mark Friesen/staff

Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Interagency Fire Center

2,552 acres



Map: Mark Friesen/staff

Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Interagency Fire Center



# Over 654,000 acres!

- Either sole source from a power line ignition or power line ignition were a significant source of additional ignitions and growth

Why did Pacific Power not heed its own warnings?



**Pacific Power OR** 

@PacificPower\_OR



High winds are forecast for later today in many parts of our area. For storm ready tips, visit us at [pacificpower.net/prepare](https://pacificpower.net/prepare)



**NWS Portland**  @NWSPortland

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9:09 AM · Sep 7, 2020



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10:11 AM · Sep 7, 2020



See Consumers Power Inc's oth...

# There are reports that power line ignitions contributed to fires in Mollalla, Estacada – and to the Almeda and Lionshead fires



Violet Kuehl

One of the first fires in Molalla was caused by a down line. It took pge 2 hours to show up and shut off the power so of course the fire dept couldn't get started on the fire til they showed up. If they had shown up sooner the fire wouldn't have gotten so out of control.

2d Like



Jamie Cleveland

[David Drummond](#) My co worker also mentioned this to me. He lives in Estacada and his power likewise what not turned off. He said if power had been shut off many of the fires would not have happened. He said he will be attending community hearing to voice his concerns!!

3d Like



PGE followed this protocol and shut the power down

[https://www.pge.com/en\\_US/residential/outages/public-safety-power-shutoff/why-psps-events-occur.page](https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/outages/public-safety-power-shutoff/why-psps-events-occur.page)

## How a PSPS is determined

We monitor the below weather factors to decide whether a PSPS is needed to keep communities safe. Although you may not live or work in a high fire-threat area or an area experiencing high winds, your power may be shut off if your community relies on a line that runs through an area that does.



### Red Flag Warning

A warning declared by the National Weather Service that weather conditions could lead to fire and rapid spread.



### Low Humidity

20% or lower humidity. Low humidity creates dry vegetation, which fuel fire.



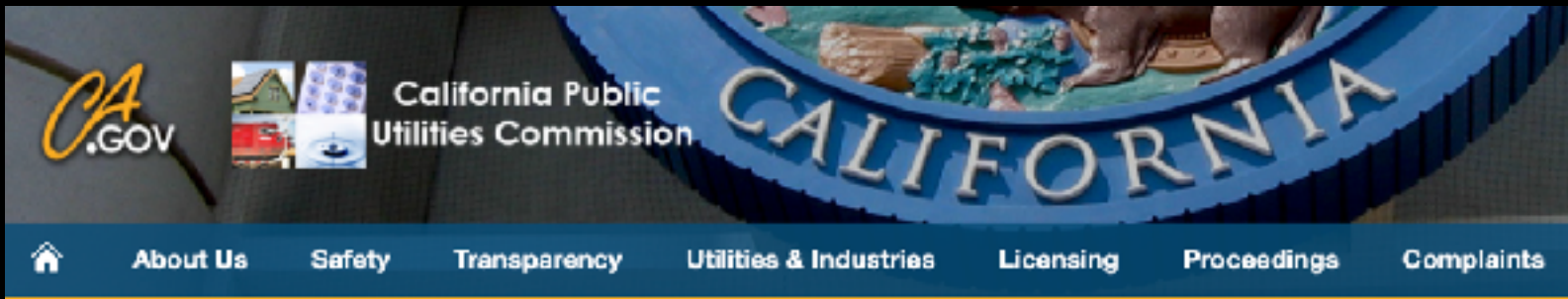
### High Winds

Sustained wind speeds above 25 MPH and wind gusts above 45 MPH can cause fire to spread.



### PG&E Observations

On-the-ground findings from PG&E crews.



## California requires reporting and investigation of all power line ignitions

### Staff Investigations

The CPUC is conducting staff investigations of certain wildfires to assess the compliance of electric facilities with applicable rules and regulations (CAL FIRE or the local fire district determines the sources of ignition of the fires and the way that the fires spread). The wildfires under staff investigation are:

- Jan. 20, 2021: PG&E's Incident Report for Freedom Fire
- Oct. 26, 2020: Southern California Edison's Incident Report for Silverado Fire
- Oct. 8, 2020: PG&E's Incident Report for Zogg Mine Road and Jenny Road Lane 150, Shasta
- Sept. 18, 2020: PacifiCorp Pacific Power Incident Report for Slater Fire in Happy Camp
- Sept. 15, 2020: Southern California Edison's Incident Report for Bobcat Fire
- May 7, 2020: CPUC Penalizes PG&E \$2 Billion for 2017 and 2018 Wildfires
- Dec. 17, 2019: The CPUC's Safety and Enforcement Division filed a proposed settlement addressing issues involving the role of PG&E facilities in igniting fires in its service territory in 2017 and 2018, including wildfires that occurred in Butte, Calaveras, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma, and Yuba Counties, and the deadly 2018 Camp Fire.
  - [Press Release](#)
  - [Settlement Agreement](#)
- Nov. 4, 2019: PG&E's Incident Report for a fire in Martinez on Oct. 27, 2019
- Oct. 30, 2019: Southern California Edison's Incident Report for Easy Fire in Ventura
- Oct. 30, 2019: PG&E's Incident Report for a fire on Bethel Island on Oct. 27, 2019
- Oct. 30, 2019: PG&E's Incident Report for Cypress Fire in Oakley on Oct. 27, 2019
- Oct. 28, 2019: PG&E's Incident Report for a fire in Milpitas on Oct. 27, 2019
- Oct. 27, 2019: PG&E's Incident Report for Pleasant Hill and Condit Road, Lafayette

## California requires preservation of evidence of power line ignitions

- [Public Utilities Code 316](#) and [General Order 95, Rule 19](#) govern the preservation of evidence for investigation in accordance with the Public Utilities Code, including,

NEWS / PRESS RELEASES

December 01, 2020

## Wyden, Merkley Introduce Bill to Ensure More Wildfire Resilient Power Grid

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley today introduced new legislation to incentivize utility companies to do more to reduce wildfire risks as aging power infrastructure ignites wildfires in Oregon and across the West.

Wyden and Merkley's [Wildfire Resilient Power Grid Act of 2020](#) would ensure power companies do their part to reduce the risk of wildfires through power system upgrades such as the undergrounding of power lines, fire safety equipment installation and proper vegetation management.

"First and foremost, this is a public

# Oregon senators introduce bill aimed at reducing threat of power line fueled wildfires

Zach Urness, Salem Statesman Journal  
Updated 94 days ago

PHOTOS: Fire rages at Old Gates School / Upward Bound Camp



5 of 5 | On the night of Sept. 7, downed power lines ignited a fire at the Gates School and former Beachie Creek Fire incident command team post. (Photo: Photos courtes... [more](#)