



Virginia Harman

CEO'S BOARD MEETING

BULLETIN

March 12, 2026

MPE PREPARES FOR UPCOMING WILDFIRE SEASON

System settings prioritize safety over reliability when risk is high

After one of the warmest and driest winters on record, MPE's leadership team discussed with the Board the steps being taken to prepare for a potentially long and challenging wildfire season.

The Board recognizes that members depend on electricity for their homes and businesses and does not take outages lightly. However, during periods of extreme wildfire danger—when safety is weighed against reliability—safety must come first.

Staff have been working for months on proactive measures to reduce wildfire risk and strengthen system reliability. As was necessary last year, MPE will again place portions of the system into higher-sensitivity protection settings whenever an area is under fire restrictions issued by local county officials or when the National Weather Service issues a Red Flag Warning. These fire protection settings are critical to lowering the risk of a wildfire being sparked by an issue on a power line.

MPE's approach focuses on targeted, higher-sensitivity protection settings, rather than widespread Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). This strategy helps reduce wildfire risk without shutting off power to large areas for days at a time.

MPE has also deployed equipment upgrades to improve fault detection and isolation, allowing crews to better pinpoint problems so outages affect fewer members. In addition, crews are completing repairs identified during the 2025 system-wide aerial inspection and annual pole inspections, further strengthening system resilience. MPE has also invested in two automated smoke-detection cameras in areas at higher risk of wildfires.

Adam Paulson, VP of Operations, shared that he and Susan Henderson, VP of Engineering, have spent their careers building an electric distribution system designed to keep the lights on through any storm. "Now, we want the lights to go off to keep our communities safe," Paulson said. "I can't, in good conscience, leave the power grid on regular settings and risk starting a wildfire that could destroy homes, take lives, and devastate livelihoods."

Keeping members better informed has also been a multi-department effort. Enhancements have been made to the outage map to provide status updates, and more area-specific communications will be delivered throughout this wildfire season.

Other Board Meeting Items

- **No Contested Elections for 2026:** Aaron Street, VP of Member Relations, reported to the Board that there are no contested director elections this year. The deadline for candidates to submit their paperwork had passed, and the only submitted applications were from the incumbents – Cray Healy for District 2 and Mike Sjobakken for District 5.
- **Board Approves UCC Donations:** The Board's first of three reviews of donation requests for 2026 was held, and the following donations from the unclaimed capital credits fund (UCC) were approved:

\$20,000 to Sustainable Grand for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of their workforce development project that is included in MPE's New ERA Community Benefits Plan (CBP); \$10,000 to the Flying Hills Arena Association toward a new concession building; \$10,000 for the Rocky Mountain Folk School's Phase 2 of their Space to Create project; \$7,500 for the Grand Foundation's Workforce Housing Program, also a part of MPE's CBP; and \$6,500 for Eternal Hills Christian Preschool for its fire safety exit signage. The next review of donation requests will be at the Board's July meeting. See www.MPEI.com/Donation-Request for more information.