



New General Manager Selected

The Board of Directors has selected the next General Manager. Greg Mendonca will join the OCEC staff on July 19th.

Greg was most recently the Vice President of Power Supply for Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative (PNGC), an Oregon-based electric generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative owned by 15 Northwest electric distribution cooperative utilities with service territory in seven western states (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming). He has over 15 years of electric utility industry experience in the Pacific Northwest.

Before joining Okanogan County Electric, he worked in the scheduling and trading operations department at PNGC in various roles from real-time trader to Manager of Resource Planning. In his most recent role as Vice President of Power Supply at PNGC he was responsible for power contract management, integrated resource planning, load forecasting, wholesale rate modeling, wholesale electricity acquisition, resource scheduling, and energy efficiency.

He received a Bachelor of Science of Business Administration and a Masters of Business Administration from Oregon State University in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Greg resides with his wife Jessica and two children, Cora and Miles.

Upon receiving the news Greg stated "I am extremely excited for the opportunity to take on the position of General Manager at Okanogan County Electric to provide safe and reliable service to our members. Member service is at the heart of the mission of every electric cooperative and I am honored the Board of Directors has selected me to lead the team at OCEC to continue to work towards that mission. The industry landscape is rapidly changing and we must not only rise to meet the challenges facing us today, but we must also plan for the challenges we face in the future. Finally, I look forward to moving my family into such a beautiful valley and meeting members in the community."

Hours:

Monday - Thursday
7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

Office Info:

93 W Chewuch Rd
Winthrop, WA 98862
Toll Free: (888) 710-2228
Local: (509) 996-2228

Online:

Web:
www.ocec.coop
Email:
info@ocec.coop
Twitter:
[@ocec_info](https://twitter.com/ocec_info)

OCEC Board:

Sara Carlberg
scarlberg@ocec.coop

Cara Godwin
cgodwin@ocec.coop

John Kirner
jkirner@ocec.coop

Michael Murray
mmurray@ocec.coop

Dale Sekijima
dsekijima@ocec.coop

Travis Thornton
tthornton@ocec.coop

Alan Watson
awatson@ocec.coop

OCEC Fire Mitigation Plan

OCEC to Include Fire Safety Shutoffs in its Fire Mitigation Plan (Part 1)

(This is the first of a two-part series on OCEC's Fire Mitigation Plan. The plan and both articles are on the OCEC website.)

Across the west and here in the Methow Valley, longer, drier, more dangerous fire seasons have become the new normal. In response to this, OCEC has developed a Fire Mitigation Program. This program works towards lowering risks of trees outside the easements and the required clear zones around the wires from getting into the overhead lines and creating an ignition source. These actions are based on similar programs California utilities developed in response to recent fires in California. Recently, the 2020 fires in Oregon have prompted OCEC to add the potential for Fire Safety Shutoffs (FSS) to its fire mitigation plans.

Background

OCEC has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program to manage vegetation posing a threat to power lines. OCEC has augmented this program by bringing in an outside forester in 2019 and again in 2021 to survey the lines and the trees outside of the easements. OCEC also relies on members to notify us of large branches or hazard trees that could potentially fall through the lines on windy days. If you encounter these situations, please report them to the OCEC office.

In addition to vegetation management, OCEC will take the extra step to minimize the risk of fire during red flag conditions by turning off substation reclosers during these conditions. A recloser is an automatic high-voltage electric switch that operates much like a circuit breaker in your home. When a household breaker trips, it will remain off until it is manually reset. A recloser will test the electric line by automatically closing to see if the problem has been removed. If the problem was only temporary, the recloser will stay closed and power will remain on. This operation is sometimes seen as a "blink" at your home.

To mitigate the risk of fire, OCEC will place the reclosers on "non-reclose" so when there is a possible problem, the breaker will operate and the line will be de-energized until OCEC crews can manually inspect the line for problems. Once the line is manually inspected and it is all-clear, the line will be re-energized. This will possibly create longer, more frequent outages. Also, certain remote forested areas will have their reclosers turned off starting when dry conditions warrant it.

Fire Safety Shutoffs

A Fire Safety Shutoff (FSS) is when a utility proactively de-energizes an overhead line so that if a tree falls into the line, a fault (and possible fire) will not result. This would occur during certain red flag/high wind conditions. Trees outside the easements that could fall into the lines are the biggest concern.

Conditions Driving FSS Decisions

The following conditions are examined when making FSS decisions:

- Weather conditions
 - Red Flag Conditions, high forecasted or actual sustained winds, high forecasted or actual wind gusts, low relative humidity, recent history of low precipitation
- Vegetation conditions
- Field observations and flying/falling debris
- Situational awareness
- Expected duration of conditions

Taking these pro-active fire safety steps during red flag conditions may cause more frequent and longer outages but we hope that our members will understand the benefits of reduced risk outweigh the increase in possible outages.