

# WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN

2026



**SIoux VALLEY**  
ENERGY A Tristate Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative

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# Introduction/Executive Summary

Sioux Valley Energy is committed to providing safe, reliable electric service to our member-owners while proactively managing wildfire risk within our service territory. This Wildfire Mitigation Plan represents a comprehensive, systematic approach to preventing and mitigating wildfire hazards associated with our electrical infrastructure.

This plan has been developed in compliance with South Dakota's wildfire mitigation legislation and incorporates industry best practices, established maintenance programs, and lessons learned from utilities across the nation. It builds upon Sioux Valley Energy's existing robust inspection and maintenance programs to create an integrated wildfire risk management framework.

Our approach recognizes that wildfire mitigation requires a multi-layered strategy combining infrastructure hardening, vegetation management, operational practices, employee training, and community engagement. This plan describes the Cooperative's current procedures to ensure effective wildfire mitigation.

## Key Components:

- Identification and enhanced management of higher fire risk areas
- Comprehensive infrastructure inspection and maintenance programs
- Systematic vegetation management with 5-year cycle
- System hardening through modern equipment and design standards
- Operational protocols for elevated fire risk conditions
- Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) procedures as last resort
- Emergency response and system restoration procedures
- Coordination with local and state emergency management agencies
- Community outreach and member education initiatives

This plan will be reviewed and updated at least biennially, with annual reports documenting our compliance and effectiveness. All updates to the plan and annual reports will be reviewed and approved by Sioux Valley Energy's Board of Directors (approval authority).

Through diligent implementation of these strategies, Sioux Valley Energy aims to minimize wildfire risk while maintaining the reliable service our members depend upon. This plan supports the following objectives on the Balanced Scorecard:

- M1 - (Provide reliable power)
  - Fires disrupt service.
- M2 - (Highly responsive: Be there when the members need us)
  - Responding to any/all wildfires that affect the system to ensure it is safe for first responders.
- M4 (Involved in our community)
  - Public relations/communications on wildfire education.

- M5 - (Care for the environment)
  - Wildfires have a complex impact on the environment. While wildfires can renew ecosystems and release nutrients, they can also harm habitats and degrade air and water quality.
- F3 - (Optimize distribution operating expenses and general assets)
  - This plan helps support this objective via reinforcing more robust line design criteria and construction that helps optimize operating expenses.
- C2 - (Enhance and improve member education, communication, and engagement)
  - Public relations/communications on wildfire education.
- C3 - (Research, assess, prioritize, and plan for technologies that deliver value to SVE)
  - By implementation of, and improvement under, this plan we expect to increase our visibility on the system. This includes adding downline reclosers and regulators to the SCADA system, allowing for more flexibility and insight into the operation of our distribution system.
- C5 - (Define the desired elements and plan to be a progressive, adaptive, and trusted leader in our industry)
  - We will be among the first utilities in South Dakota to implement downline distribution assets to SCADA.
- C6 - (Engage with power suppliers to allow flexibility to meet evolving member needs and expectations)
  - As part of this plan, we will work with East River Electric and L&O Power to manage high fire danger to minimize risk and impact of wildfires to our members.
- K1 - (Embed a culture of safety and wellness)
  - Wildfire education does not stop with educating the membership, everyone in the organization will benefit from education on wildfire.
- K3 - (Continuously improve internal communications)

Implementation of this plan will require communication and coordination between all departments within the Cooperative.

## **Purpose of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan**

This Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP, or Plan) describes Sioux Valley Energy’s strategies, programs, and procedures to mitigate the threat of power line-ignited wildfire, including current Sioux Valley Energy protocols and procedures and industry best practices. The Plan addresses the unique features of its service territory, such as topography, weather, infrastructure, grid configuration, and areas most prone to wildfire risks. It also covers the maintenance of distribution assets as well as vegetation management and the rights-of-way clearing.

This Plan complies with the requirements outlined in SDCL 49-49, titled “Wildfire Mitigation Plans”. This new law requires that a report detailing compliance with the plan is submitted for review by the Board of Directors annually. The Wildfire Mitigation Plan will also be updated and submitted for approval by the Board of Directors at least

biennially, incorporating a revised risk analysis and updated recommendations to reflect new technology and industry best practices.

## Plan Objectives

The primary objective of this Wildfire Mitigation Plan is to provide a description of the procedures, strategies, and standards that ensure safe, reliable, and economic electric service to members while minimizing the likelihood that utility assets may be the origin or contributing factor in the ignition of a wildfire. To meet this goal, the utility routinely constructs, operates, and maintains its electrical lines and equipment in a manner consistent with current industry best management practices, National Electric Safety Code (NESC) and Rural Utilities Service (RUS) regulations, as well as applicable state laws.

In addition to minimizing ignition risks, Sioux Valley Energy aims to ensure long-term resilience of the electric grid by assessing emerging technologies and best practices that reduce the potential for service interruptions and improve restoration of service following an outage. A secondary objective is to measure the effectiveness of these mitigation strategies through annual evaluation of key performance metrics, with the flexibility to modify or replace any component that proves unnecessary or ineffective.

## Utility Profile

Sioux Valley Energy is a distribution cooperative with headquarters located in Colman, SD. The Cooperative provides electricity to more than 25,000 members through approximately 30,500 service locations. These service locations are spread across a diverse makeup of densely populated urban areas, rural communities, agriculturally based loads as well as commercial and industrial loads. A system area map can be seen in Figure 1.

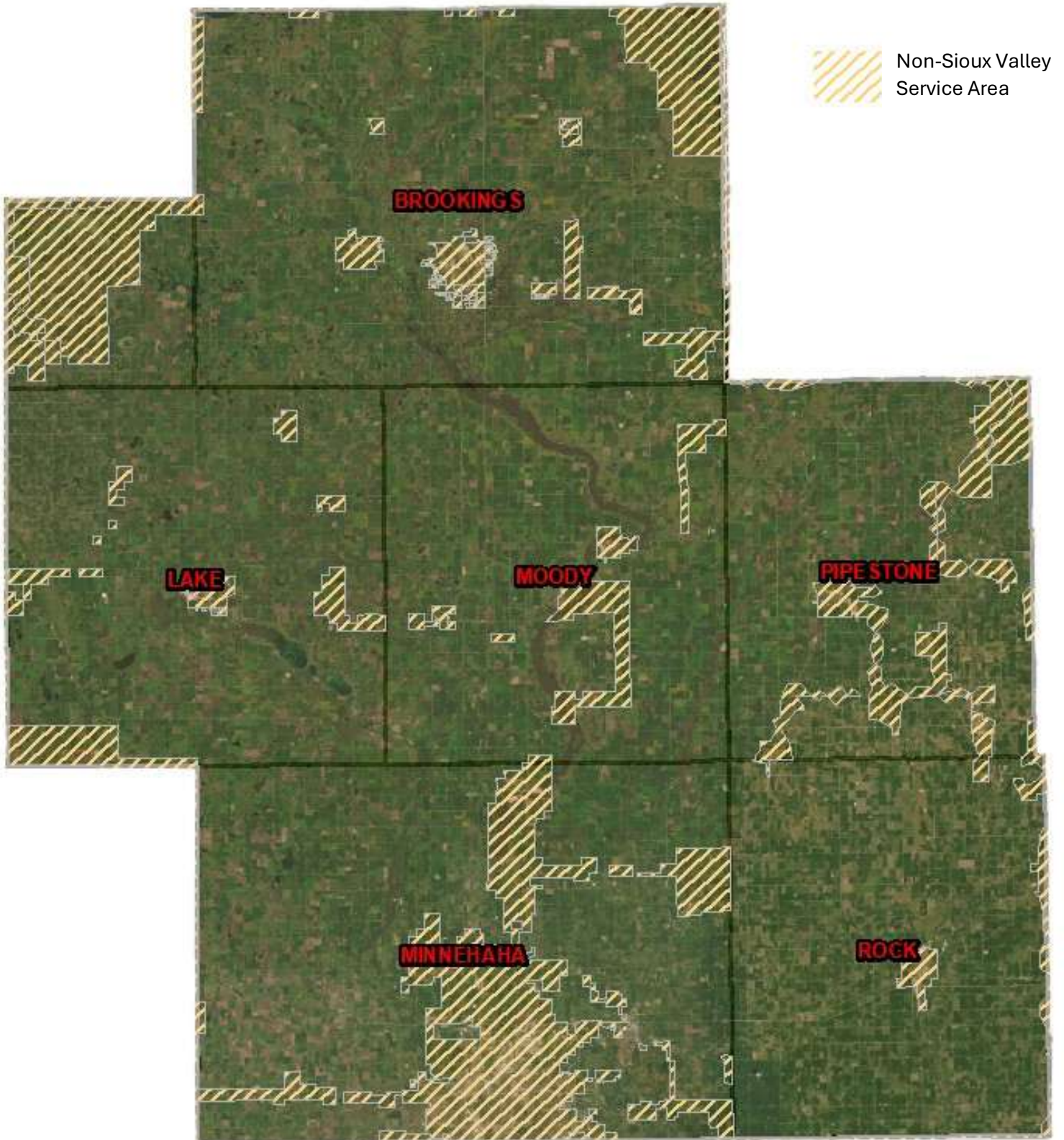
The Cooperative serves most of the rural areas of Minnehaha, Lake, Moody, Brookings, and a portion of, Kingsbury counties in east/southeast South Dakota and Rock and Pipestone counties in southwestern Minnesota. The Cooperative also serves the towns of Brandon, Chester, Colton, Crooks, Hartford, Humboldt, Junius, Lyons, Sinai, Sioux Falls, and Valley Springs in South Dakota and the towns of Beaver Creek, Hardwick, Hills, Kenneth, Magnolia, Steen, Ash Creek, and Kanaranzi in Minnesota.

The service territory consists of a mix of tallgrass prairie, wetland vegetation, rocky outcroppings, and cultivated crops. A large majority (over 90%) of the land is developed or utilized for agricultural crops. Due to the rural nature of much of the system, there are small, Wildland-Urban Interface areas in the territory (Figure 2). Some of these areas are growing, mainly around the Sioux Falls area, as the communities grow and expand. Fire danger is highest in the spring and/or fall depending largely on the moisture present in the preceding season.

The primary distribution system is constructed for and operated at 7.2/12.47 kV. The system includes approximately 6,200 miles of distribution line, of which approximately 65% is underground, supplied from 47 distribution substations. In 2014 Sioux Valley Energy modified overhead construction specifications to 'harden the system' by shortening span lengths and up classing poles, among other things.

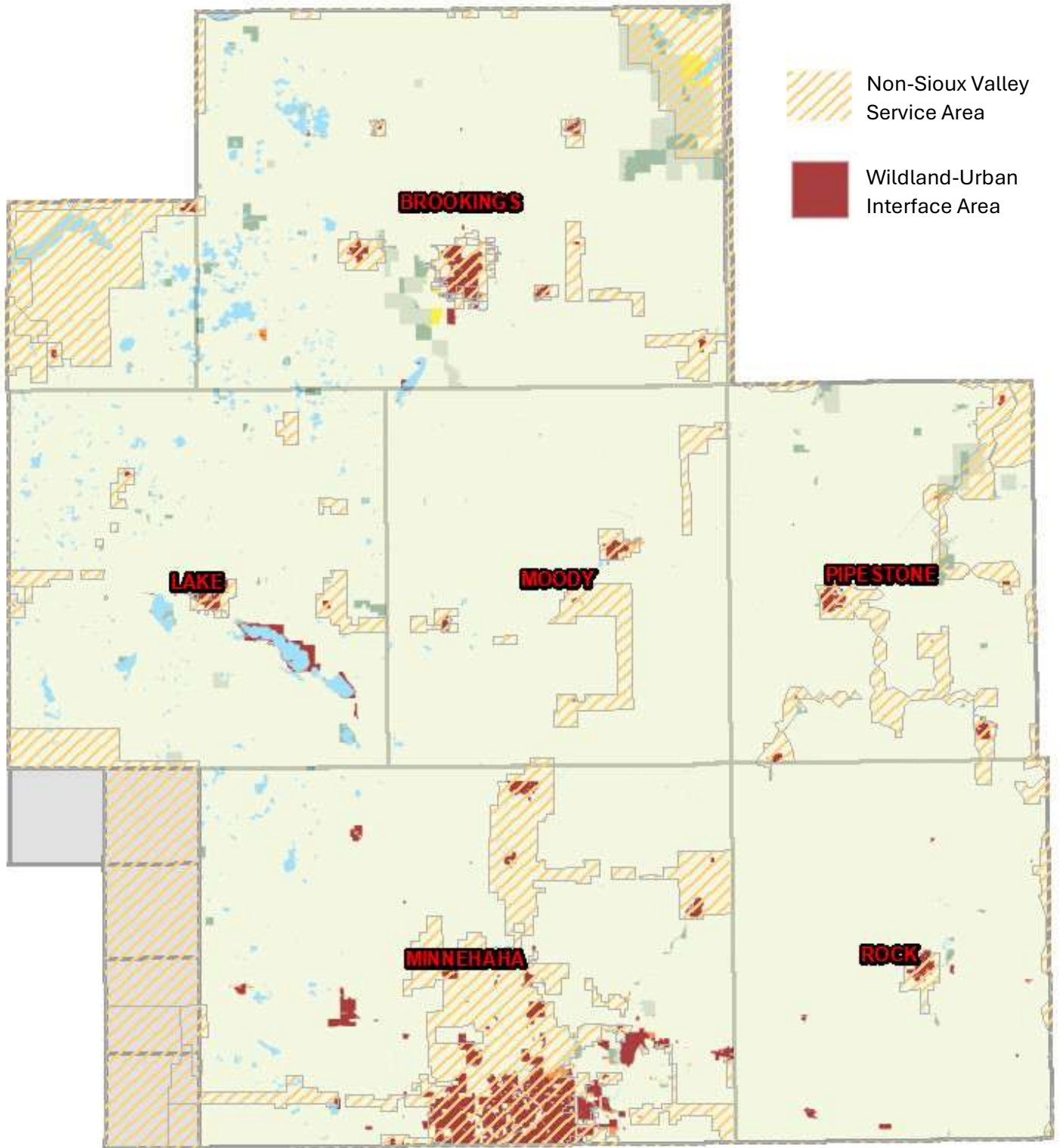
# Service Area Map

Figure 1:



# Wildland-Urban Interface Map

Figure 2:



# Elevated Wildfire Risk Areas and Infrastructure Locations

## Assessment Methodology

Sioux Valley Energy has conducted a comprehensive assessment of wildfire risk across our service territory. This assessment considers multiple factors including vegetation density, topography, weather patterns, land use, and historical fire data.

### Key Risk Factors Evaluated:

- Fuel sources (vegetation type, density, and combustibility).
- Weather conditions (wind patterns, precipitation, humidity, drought).
- Topography (areas prone to high winds, challenging access).
- Land use (wildland-urban interface, agricultural operations).
- Historical fire activity in the region.
- Infrastructure concentration and equipment age.

## Designated Elevated Fire Risk Areas

Based on our risk assessment, the following areas within Sioux Valley Energy's service territory have been identified as having heightened wildfire risk:

### Elevated Risk Areas:

- Wooded creek and river bottom areas with dense vegetation.
- Shelter belts and tree plantings near agricultural operations.
- Areas with significant grassland during dry seasons.
- Rural residential interface areas with mixed vegetation.

### Moderate Risk Areas:

- Open agricultural areas with crop residue during harvest season
- Pastureland with native prairie grass
- Areas with historically low precipitation

### Specific Geographic Designations:

The areas identified as elevated risk areas can be seen in Figure 3. This map was created by the United States Forest Service and depicts Wildfire Hazard Potential by combining simulated fire behavior (likelihood and intensity) with spatial fuels, vegetation, and historical fire occurrence. As shown, there are several small, scattered areas of elevated risk. From the map one can quickly identify the higher vegetation areas around lakes, creeks, and rivers. The most notable area is a band of potential that runs generally north-south just west of the City of Brookings.

## Enhanced Measures for Elevated Risk Areas

Facilities and lines located in designated high fire risk areas receive enhanced attention through:

- More intense vegetation inspections and management.
- Priority scheduling for infrastructure inspections.
- Enhanced clearance standards exceeding minimum requirements.
- Consideration for system hardening projects and upgrades.
- Increased operational awareness during fire season.
- Potential for modified recloser settings during extreme conditions.

Figure 3: Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP)

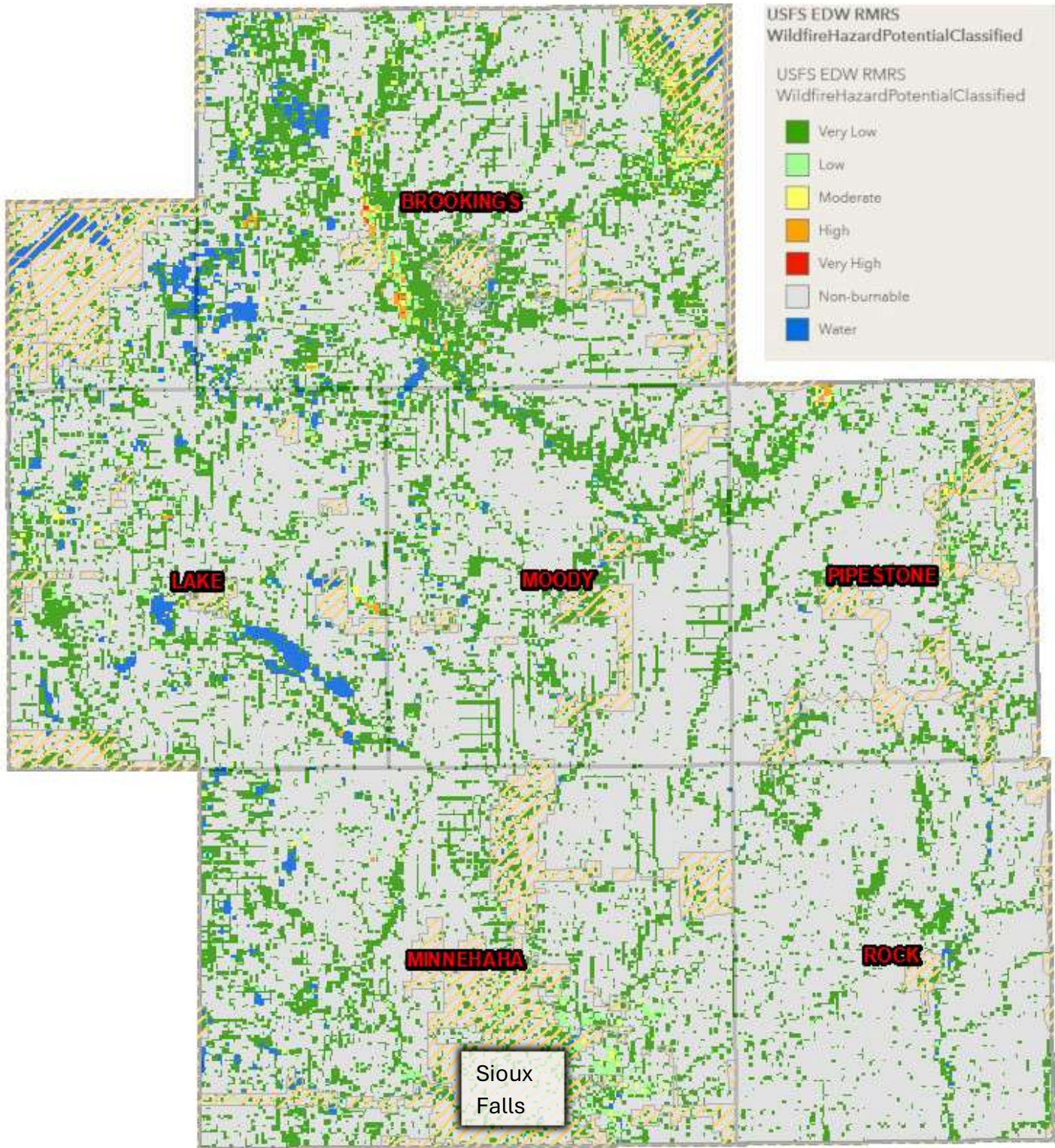
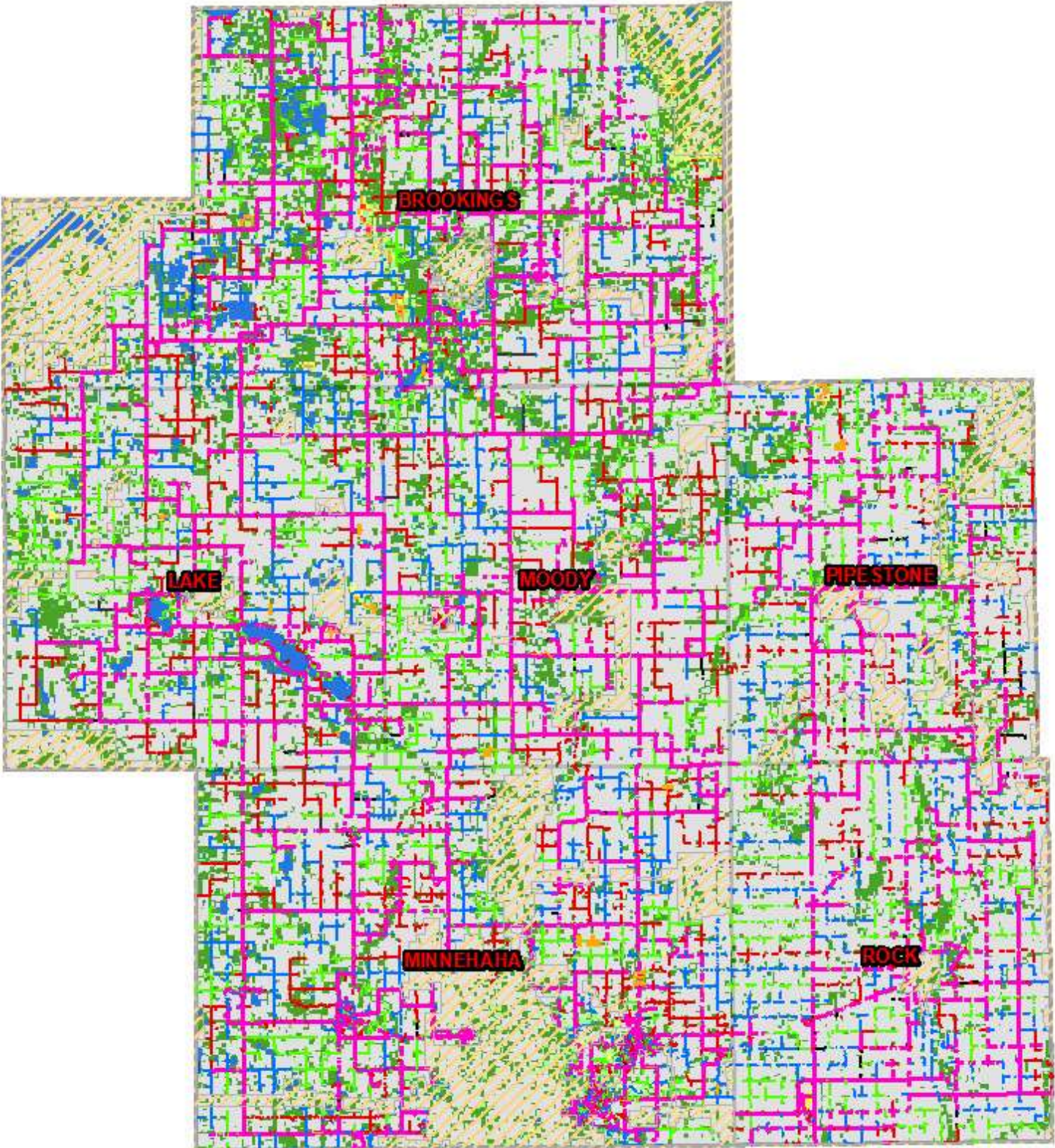


Figure 4: WHP with power lines



# Inspection, Operation, and Maintenance Standards

## Overview

Sioux Valley Energy maintains a comprehensive Distribution Maintenance Plan that defines infrastructure inspections and maintenance programs designed to ensure reliable operation, identify potential hazards, and prevent equipment failures that could lead to wildfire ignition and other unplanned outages. These programs are fully integrated into our wildfire mitigation strategy.

All inspection and maintenance activities are conducted in accordance with the 2023 National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) and industry’s best practices.

## Priority Rating System

All identified deficiencies are assigned a priority rating, and corrective action is taken according to the timelines in Table 2 below. Service orders are created to track repairs and maintain historical maintenance records.

Table 2:

Priority Code	Rating	Description	Time to Address
High	1	The current condition is a danger to the public, employees, or operation of the system. The equipment cannot remain in service and requires immediate action.	Immediately
Medium	2	The equipment/situation is not currently an immediate danger. However, the condition will likely lead to a hazardous situation in the near future, if not repaired.	30 days
Low	3	Minor issues. No immediate danger. Repairs will be completed when time and/or conditions allow.	180 days

If a maintenance item cannot be repaired within the designated timeframe, it will be reassessed to determine if escalation is warranted.

## Inspection Overview

### **Pole Inspection Program:**

Sioux Valley currently has approximately 50,000 poles that are inspected on a 12-year cycle, with a plan to get to a 10-year cycle. Pole inspections are performed by qualified contractors using the Sound and Bore method. Each inspection includes:

- Physical testing of pole integrity using sound and bore techniques.
- Pole butt treatment applications where required.
- Visual inspection of all mounted hardware and equipment.
- Ground resistance testing.
- Assessment of woodpecker damage, rot, checking, and other defects.
- Evaluation of pole climbing space and accessibility.

### **Specific Wildfire Risk Factors Assessed:**

- Deteriorated crossarms or hardware that could fail and cause conductor contact.
- Compromised pole structural integrity in high-wind areas.
- Damaged or missing equipment that could create arcing hazards.
- Inadequate grounding.

### **Overhead Line Inspection Program:**

The system consists of approximately 2,200 miles of overhead line that is inspected by the Cooperative's line crews on a 3-year cycle. Overhead line inspections are conducted by driving or patrolling all circuit routes. Crews perform detailed visual inspections and document deficiencies related to:

- Conductor condition (sag, corrosion, broken strands, damage).
- Hardware condition (loose, corroded, or damaged fittings).
- Insulator condition (chipped, cracked, or contaminated).
- Transformer condition (oil leaks, bushing damage, tank condition).
- Structure integrity (pole lean, damaged crossarms).
- Vegetation clearance issues.
- Joint attachment issues with other utilities.
- Guy wire and anchor condition.
- Any NESC violations or substandard conditions.

### **Wildfire-Specific Inspection Points:**

- Clearances from vegetation (trees, brush, crops).
- Equipment showing signs of overheating or arcing.
- Damaged or deteriorated insulation.
- Wildlife guards and animal protection devices.

### **Sectionalizing Equipment Inspection Program:**

Sioux Valley Energy maintains various types of sectionalizing equipment critical to system protection and wildfire prevention. Each equipment type has specific inspection and

maintenance protocols as recommended by the manufacturer, or in the absence of manufacture's recommendation, industry best-practice.

These types of equipment are crucial in that they automatically interrupt and restore power following temporary faults. Proper maintenance ensures they operate correctly and do not create extended fault conditions that could lead to ignition. Overhead sectionalizing equipment is inspected on the same 3-year cycle as the overhead line.

Electronic controllers for these system devices are also maintained periodically. Battery replacement is on a 3-year cycle. The Distribution Maintenance Plan outlines control board testing on a 6-year cycle. Equipment is taken down for maintenance or replacement when the equipment reaches the manufacturer's recommended service intervals or mechanical end-of-life.

### **Underground Equipment Inspection Program:**

Underground distribution equipment inspection is on a 9-year cycle and includes:

- Pad-mounted transformer inspections for oil leaks, bushing condition, and security.
- Cabinet and vault inspections for water intrusion, equipment condition.
- Cable condition assessment where accessible.

### **Thermal Inspection Program:**

Sioux Valley Energy conducts infrared thermal imaging inspections to identify equipment operating at elevated temperatures, which could indicate:

- Loose connections that create resistance and heat.
- Overloaded equipment.
- Deteriorating insulation.
- Internal equipment failures.

Thermal inspections are particularly valuable for wildfire prevention as they identify problems before visible damage occurs. These inspections are currently performed on distribution equipment as needed or based on load/age factors.

# Vegetation Management Practices and Standards

## Overview

Vegetation management is a cornerstone of Sioux Valley Energy's wildfire mitigation strategy. Systematic vegetation control reduces the risk of vegetation contact with energized conductors, which is a leading cause of utility-related wildfire ignitions.

Our vegetation management program ensures adequate clearances around electrical equipment and conductors while considering environmental stewardship, property owner relations, and regulatory compliance.

### **Vegetation Management Program:**

Sioux Valley Energy engages a qualified contractor to handle all vegetation management on a five-year cycle, in accordance with industry best practices. All work is performed in compliance with the 2023 National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) and utilizes industry-standard techniques including directional pruning, complete tree removal where warranted, and stump treatment and spraying to prevent regrowth. Brush clearing and disposal are also performed as part of the program, and where possible, consideration is given to property aesthetics and the preferences of affected landowners.

### **Hazard Tree Management:**

Hazard trees are dead, diseased, damaged, or structurally unsound trees with potential to fall into power lines. These trees pose significant wildfire risk if they contact energized conductors. These trees are lowered to a safe height or removed altogether.

### **Quality Control:**

To ensure the work meets established standards, Sioux Valley Energy maintains an active quality control process throughout the vegetation management program. Field audits of contractor work are conducted regularly, with completed work tracked and recorded through GIS systems. All work performed is formally documented, and any concerns raised by property owners are followed up on in a timely manner.

# Electric Construction Standards and Wildfire Prevention Strategies

## Construction Standards Overview

Just as construction standards and utility best practices evolve, Sioux Valley Energy is also continuously assessing and improving construction standards as well. This includes the commitment to rebuild a total of 125 miles of line a year, both overhead and underground. All new construction is considered system hardening.

System hardening refers to modifications and upgrades to electric facilities that reduce the likelihood of equipment failure and/or ignition. Sioux Valley Energy employs multiple strategies to harden our system against wildfire risk while improving overall reliability.

When a new project (new line, rebuild or upgrade) is identified, Sioux Valley completes extensive analysis to determine if the line should be constructed utilizing overhead or underground techniques. Many factors are considered during this analysis, including the potential of wildfire ignition. New line construction features the following:

1. Designed and built to meet or exceed the most recent National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as well as Rural Utilities Service's (RUS) construction standards.
2. Adequate phase separation to prevent wire-to-wire contact as well as animal related contacts.
3. Adequate clearance from ground, buildings, bridges, etc.
4. Animal protection devices, such as raptor guards, covered conductors, guards and flight diverters, as necessary.

## Wildfire Prevention Strategies

Day-to-day operational decisions play a critical role in preventing wildfire. Sioux Valley Energy has established operational protocols that adapt to changing environmental conditions and elevated fire risk.

### **Weather Monitoring and Situational Awareness:**

Sioux Valley Energy monitors weather conditions and fire danger levels using multiple authoritative sources, including:

- National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts and warnings.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fire weather outlook.
- South Dakota State Fire Weather information.
- Local weather station data.
- Wind speed and direction monitoring.
- Humidity and temperature data.
- Drought indices and precipitation tracking.

## **Red Flag Warnings:**

The National Weather Service issues Red Flag Warnings when weather conditions create elevated wildfire risk. Red Flag Warning criteria typically include sustained winds 15+ mph, relative humidity  $\leq 25\%$ , temperature  $>75^{\circ}\text{F}$ , extended dry period.

## **Operational Response to Fire Risk Conditions**

Sioux Valley Energy operates under a tiered response system based on fire risk conditions:

Normal Conditions:

- Standard operating procedures in effect.
- Routine maintenance and construction activities.
- Normal vegetation management operations.

Elevated Fire Risk and Red Flag Warnings:

During periods of elevated fire danger (hot, dry, windy conditions):

- Enhanced awareness among field personnel.
- Fire suppression equipment verified ready on all vehicles.

## **Recloser Settings and Operations**

### Normal Operations

Under normal conditions, reclosers operate with automatic reclosing enabled. This allows the recloser to clear temporary faults (such as lightning or momentary tree contact) and restore power automatically, minimizing outage duration.

### Modified Settings During High Fire Risk

During extreme fire risk conditions (Red Flag Warnings combined with local assessment), Sioux Valley Energy may modify recloser operations to reduce the risk of prolonged arcing or repeated fault current. Selective reclosers in high fire risk areas may be set to 'one-shot' or non-reclose mode. This allows the recloser to trip immediately on a fault, it does not attempt automatic reclosure. If reclosers are set to non-reclose, and a device trips open, then a manual inspection will be required before re-energization.

### Decision Criteria

Recloser setting modifications are made based on:

- Red Flag Warning status.
- Local weather observations (wind, humidity, temperature).
- Ground conditions (vegetation dryness, recent precipitation).
- Location in designated high fire risk area.
- Fire activity in the region.
- Input from local emergency management.

## **Patrol and Re-Energization Procedures**

### Line Patrols

During elevated fire risk periods, outages will require the following steps before re-energization:

1. Line patrol to locate and identify cause of fault.
2. Verification that fault has cleared and no fire has started.
3. Inspection of equipment and conductors.
4. Documentation of fault cause.

### Re-Energization

- Power restored only after visual confirmation of safe conditions.
- Fire watch maintained if any smoldering detected.
- Coordination with fire department if ignition occurred.

## **Fire Season Equipment Requirements**

During fire season, all Sioux Valley Energy vehicles and contractor equipment must carry fire suppression tools. This includes a fire extinguisher, shovel/rakes, and communication equipment. Although not ideal, hot work coverup blankets can also be used to snuff out a fire.

## **Work Site Fire Prevention**

### Hot Work Restrictions

During Red Flag Warning conditions efforts shall be made to avoid high-risk activities. Examples of such would include driving and parking in tall, dry vegetation, digging or augering in rocky soil near dry vegetation, chainsaw work near dry slash/debris piles, etc. If these activities are unavoidable then a fire watch shall be established during work and continue for an adequate length of time after completion. Fire suppression equipment shall be immediately available. If an ignition does happen, Dispatch shall be notified immediately so that emergency services can be notified/activated.

# De-energization Protocols – Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS)

## Overview

Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS), also known as de-energization, is the proactive shutdown of electric power to reduce wildfire risk during extreme fire danger conditions. While PSPS is an important tool in the wildfire mitigation toolkit, it carries significant risks and consequences for members and communities.

Sioux Valley Energy views PSPS as a last resort measure to be used only when the risk of catastrophic wildfire outweighs the substantial risks created by de-energization.

## Statutory Considerations

South Dakota wildfire mitigation legislation requires utilities to consider the following specific factors when developing de-energization strategies:

### Reasonable Access to Powerlines:

The ability of Sioux Valley Energy to reasonably access the proposed powerline for de-energization must be considered. Factors include:

- Physical accessibility of line sectionalizing equipment.
- Location of switches, reclosers, and circuit breakers.
- Ability to isolate specific circuits or line sections.
- Travel time required to access remote equipment.
- Weather and road conditions effect on access.

### Balance of Wildfire Risk with Electricity Supply Needs:

The decision to de-energize requires careful balancing of competing risks:

#### Wildfire Risk Factors:

- Severity of weather conditions (wind speed, humidity, temperature).
- Red Flag Warning status.
- Ground fuel conditions (vegetation dryness, crop residue).
- Location of line in high fire risk area.
- Actual fire activity in the region.
- Ability to respond to faults quickly.

#### Community Electricity Needs:

- Continued power supply for homes and businesses.
- Agricultural operations (livestock watering, ventilation, milking).
- Medical needs (home medical equipment, refrigerated medications).
- Communication systems.
- Water and wastewater systems.
- Economic impacts on businesses.

### Potential Impact to Public Safety and First Responders:

De-energization can increase public safety risks:

- Loss of water supply for firefighting (wells, booster pumps, water treatment).
- Disruption of emergency communications (cell towers, internet, dispatch centers).
- Impacts on medical facilities and emergency services.
- Traffic control issues (non-functioning signals and streetlights).
- Inability to operate motorized gates during evacuation.
- Medical emergencies for members with powered medical equipment.
- Negative impacts on medically vulnerable populations (loss of air conditioning, refrigeration).
- Traffic congestion from evacuations delaying emergency response.

### **PSPS Decision Framework**

Decision Authority:

Authority to implement a PSPS rests with Sioux Valley Energy's senior leadership in consultation with system operations personnel, local partner emergency agencies and services, and/or the National Weather Service.

Field Authority:

In emergency situations where imminent wildfire threat exists, qualified Sioux Valley Energy operations personnel have authority to de-energize specific circuits to protect public safety.

### **Criteria for PSPS Consideration:**

A PSPS may be considered when multiple factors align:

- Red Flag Warning issued by National Weather Service.
- Extreme weather forecast (sustained winds >30 mph, humidity <15%, temp >85°F).
- Severe drought conditions.
- Active wildfire activity in the region.
- Equipment failures or system conditions create elevated ignition risk.
- Local emergency management request or recommendation.

Factors Against PSPS:

- Impacts on critical infrastructure (hospitals, water systems, emergency services).
- Large number of members with medical needs dependent on power.
- Limited wildfire fuel in the de-energization area.
- Ability to respond quickly to faults and restore service.
- Recent precipitation or high humidity moderating fire risk.

### **PSPS Notification Procedures**

If a PSPS is determined necessary, Sioux Valley Energy will provide maximum advance notice to affected members and stakeholders. Advance notification (when possible), will be sent to members via at least one of the following methods:

- Text messages
- Email notifications

- Phone calls
- Social media

Priority Notification will be made to members with registered medical needs, critical infrastructure operators, large agricultural operations, critical facilities (medical, water, etc.), and emergency services.

In the event immediate emergency de-energization is necessary due to an imminent public safety threat, notifications will be made as soon as possible via all channels, including immediate notification to emergency services.

# Post-Wildfire Re-Energization Procedures

## Overview

Following a wildfire event or Public Safety Power Shutoff, restoring electric service safely and efficiently is critical. This section outlines procedures for damage assessment, safety verification, and systematic restoration.

### Post-Wildfire Damage Assessment

#### Initial Assessment:

Following any wildfire event, the first priority is coordinating with fire officials to determine when affected areas are safe for crew access. Once clearance is granted, crews are deployed to conduct visual inspections of all affected circuits, documenting visible damage to poles, conductors, and equipment through written records and photographs for both internal documentation and insurance purposes.

During the inspection process, immediate hazards are identified and flagged for priority attention, while the full extent of necessary repairs is assessed to guide restoration efforts. Inspections cover all critical components of the affected infrastructure, including pole integrity for signs of fire damage, charring, and structural soundness, as well as conductors for heat damage, broken strands, and compromised connections.

Equipment such as transformers, reclosers, switches, and meters are evaluated alongside insulators, which are examined for cracking or smoke and soot contamination. Guy wires, anchors, service drops, and connections to structures are also assessed, along with any underground equipment that may have been exposed to fire.

#### Re-Energization Steps:

Before any affected circuit can be re-energized, a series of safety confirmations must be completed. Fire officials must first confirm that the area is safe for electrical restoration, after which a visual patrol is conducted to verify that no visible damage exists that could cause immediate failure. All immediate hazards, including downed wires and damaged equipment must be fully addressed. Where possible, equipment is tested and verified operational prior to restoration. Throughout this process, close coordination with emergency services is maintained to ensure restoration timing aligns with broader public safety efforts.

## **Wildfire Mitigation Plan Cost Analysis**

The implementation of this Wildfire Mitigation Plan is not expected to result in significant additional costs to Sioux Valley Energy. The majority of activities outlined in this plan are already integrated into existing operational programs, including routine inspection and maintenance, vegetation management, and standard emergency response protocols. Because these efforts are conducted as part of normal business operations, the incremental cost attributable specifically to wildfire mitigation is minimal and does not represent a material deviation from baseline expenditures.

Where enhancements or new initiatives are introduced, every effort is made to incorporate them efficiently into existing workflows and contractor relationships, further limiting the need for standalone wildfire-specific investment. Sioux Valley Energy is committed to maintaining a robust wildfire mitigation posture while remaining responsible stewards of operational resources.

# Community Outreach and Education

## Overview

Effective wildfire mitigation requires a partnership between Sioux Valley Energy and the communities we serve. Public awareness and member engagement are essential components of our wildfire prevention strategy. It is important to note that elevated wildfire risk can vary significantly from year to year, depending on drought conditions, seasonal temperatures, wind patterns, and fuel accumulation. As a result, the intensity and urgency of our outreach efforts are adjusted accordingly, and members are encouraged to stay engaged with Sioux Valley Energy's communications each season regardless of conditions in prior years. The territory can experience elevated fire danger in the spring, fall, or occasionally, both.

### Pre-Fire Season Outreach

Prior to the start of each fire season, typically in the spring, Sioux Valley Energy will proactively reach out to members with wildfire awareness information. This communication includes an overview of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan and its key provisions, fire prevention tips for property owners, vegetation clearance guidelines near power lines, and instructions for reporting downed wires or dangerous conditions. Members are also informed about Public Safety Power Shutoff awareness and preparation, along with emergency contact information.

This outreach is delivered through multiple channels to ensure broad reach across our service territory. Information can be distributed through printed and electronic member newsletters, the Sioux Valley Energy website, social media campaigns, and local media including newspaper and radio. Any, or all, methods may be utilized during an education campaign.

### During Fire Season Communication

Once fire season is underway Sioux Valley Energy shifts to active, ongoing communication that reflects current and changing conditions. Because wildfire risk levels can fluctuate considerably throughout the season and from one year to the next, members are kept informed of current fire danger levels, Red Flag Warning notifications, and wildfire prevention reminders on a regular basis. Planned vegetation management activities in member areas and any system maintenance affecting fire risk areas are also communicated during this period.

Emergency notifications are sent to members if a Public Safety Power Shutoff is being considered or implemented.

### Educational Content

Sioux Valley Energy is committed to providing members with the information they need to understand wildfire risks and take appropriate action on their own property. With respect to vegetation management, members are educated on why maintaining clearances near power lines is critical for wildfire prevention, what to expect during tree

trimming activities, and their rights and responsibilities as property owners. Guidance is also provided on how to maintain proper clearances around personal equipment.

On the topic of fire prevention, members are informed about how electrical equipment can contribute to wildfire ignition, how to safely operate equipment near power lines, and how to report downed power lines or damaged equipment. Emergency preparedness education covers the importance of having a family emergency plan, preparing for potential power outages, and the safe use of generators. Members with medical needs are encouraged to inform Sioux Valley Energy so that appropriate accommodations can be considered during outage events.

### **Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Education**

Public Safety Power Shutoff events can have significant impacts on members and the broader community. Therefore, if Sioux Valley Energy foresees the need to implement a Public Safety Power Shutoff we will provide detailed information to help members understand and be prepared. This includes explaining what a PSPS is and the conditions under which it may be used, how members will be notified, what to expect regarding duration and the restoration process, and what steps members can take in advance to prepare for a potential outage. Special considerations for members with medical needs are addressed, and information about available resources during a PSPS event is made accessible through multiple communication channels.

# Coordination with Outside Agencies

## Overview

Effective wildfire mitigation and emergency response requires a working relationship with local, state, and federal agencies. Sioux Valley Energy stays informed by actively monitoring communications, forecasts, and guidance issued by relevant agencies on an ongoing basis. Active coordination with applicable agencies occurs as needed, particularly during emergency response situations and in preparation for severe weather or elevated fire risk events.

### Local Agency Coordination

Sioux Valley Energy maintains working relationships with county emergency management offices throughout its service territory. While formal standing meetings are not a standard part of the current process, coordination occurs as circumstances warrant, including during periods of elevated fire danger, Red Flag Warning events, and active emergency response. This coordination focuses on communication protocols, information sharing regarding system capabilities, and alignment on emergency response efforts.

Collaboration with local fire departments and rural fire districts is an important component of emergency preparedness. Sioux Valley Energy provides relevant infrastructure information to support firefighter situational awareness during emergency events. When fires involve electrical equipment or when de-energization is required to support fire suppression efforts, direct coordination with the responding fire agency is initiated promptly. Engagement with law enforcement occurs similarly on an as-needed basis, primarily around access control, public safety, and support for incident investigations involving electrical infrastructure.

### Federal Agency Coordination

Sioux Valley Energy routinely monitors weather products and forecasts issued by the National Weather Service, including Red Flag Warnings, fire weather outlooks, and severe weather notifications. This monitoring is a key part of the organization's day-to-day situational awareness during fire season and informs operational decisions related to crew deployment, system inspection, and emergency preparedness. Direct engagement with the National Weather Service occurs as needed to support response planning during significant weather events.

### Information Sharing

Sioux Valley Energy maintains readily accessible emergency contact information and makes system maps and relevant infrastructure data available to emergency responders as needed. During active events, real-time updates on system status, de-energization actions, and restoration progress are communicated to the appropriate agencies and incident personnel. In the event of a utility-involved fire, immediate notification to the relevant responding agencies is a standard part of Sioux Valley Energy's emergency response protocol.

## Conclusion

Wildfire mitigation is an ongoing commitment requiring vigilance, resources, and collaboration among Sioux Valley Energy, our members, and community partners. This Wildfire Mitigation Plan establishes a comprehensive framework for managing wildfire risk while maintaining the reliable electric service our members depend upon.

The plan builds upon Sioux Valley Energy's strong foundation of inspection, maintenance, and vegetation management programs, enhancing them with wildfire-specific protocols and strategies proven effective across the electric utility industry.

Key elements of our approach include:

- Systematic identification and enhanced management of high fire risk areas
- Comprehensive infrastructure inspection programs with prioritized corrective action
- Robust vegetation management on a 5-year cycle.
- System hardening through modern equipment, wildlife protection, and strategic undergrounding
- Operational protocols responsive to changing fire risk conditions
- Public Safety Power Shutoff procedures as a last resort when conditions warrant
- Detailed system restoration procedures following wildfire events
- Proactive community outreach and member education
- Strong coordination with emergency management and fire agencies

This plan demonstrates Sioux Valley Energy's commitment to the safety of our members, communities, and employees. We recognize that preventing utility-caused wildfires is not only a regulatory obligation but a fundamental responsibility to those we serve.

Through diligent implementation of this plan, ongoing evaluation of our effectiveness, and continuous improvement of our practices, Sioux Valley Energy will minimize wildfire risk while delivering on our mission; Serving our Members. Always.

We invite feedback from our members and stakeholders as we work together to protect our communities from wildfire hazards.