

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

IN THE MATTER OF IDAHO POWER COMPANY'S, PETITION FOR CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY.	Docket: PCN 5 Amended Opening Testimony Sam Myers
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Date: February 3, 2023

Sam Myers, Intervenor

**68453 Little Butter Creek Rd
Heppner, Oregon 97836
Email: sam.myers84@gmail.com**

Testimony from: Steven C. Rhea,

Fire Chief - Heppner Fire & Rescue/HRFPD

“Email header: Fire Hazards and Safety around High Voltage Transmission Lines”

I did want to elaborate on Fire Hazards and Safety around High Voltage Transmission Lines. I have had multiple experiences in the 32 years of Firefighting I wanted to share with you a couple. I was assigned to a State Conflagration in Grass Valley Oregon from 7-10 to 7-12, 1994 for Structure Protection on a 20,000 Acre Range Fire that started near the Deschutes River in Sherman County. As the fire progressed up the slope to the East of the River, Smoke began drifting to a High Voltage Transmission Line near the top of the ridge. Our engine was approximately a quarter of a mile away from the Lines when the carbon from the smoke became dense enough to form a conduit from the Power Line to Ground. An explosion occurred, enough to shake the ground and cause a blinding Flash of Electricity that hit the ground so violently that dirt and rock was blown into the air. Later evidence at the site revealed the soil at the grounding point was crystallized from the heat in an area 10x10 and 4 inches thick. Anyone who had been in close proximity would not have survived the electrical charge.

Our department along with most all departments have a Standard Operating Procedure for all Fire Fighting Resources responding to any type of fire near or adjacent to High Voltage Transmission Lines. We are not to engage a fire for suppression if the fire is traveling toward within a quarter mile or the smoke plume is imminent to have contact with the Lines and or Tower. If we are currently engaged we will terminate fire fighting efforts and reengage when it is safe to do so.

The 2nd incident occurred this last July near Blalock Canyon in Gilliam County, Oregon on the Brad Anderson Ranch on Heritage Lane. During Wheat Harvest Operations a Combine was cutting near or under the High Voltage Transmission Lines that run West to East from the John Day River to Arlington, a particularly Calm, Hot Day with Low Relative Humidity created a Dust/Chaff cloud into the sky as the combine harvested near the Lines. A static electricity charge was created from the Dust Cloud to the

energized lines and formed a conduit of electricity to ground resulting in a Fire in the Wheat Stubble.
Luckily the Combine and Operator were both ok but they did loose several acres of Standing Wheat and
Stubble.

To say that High Voltage Transmission Lines do not pose a Life Safety and Values at Risk Exposure would be a lie. They certainly do and we in the Fire Service are very aware of the Danger.

Both of the Fires I mentioned can be documented by the Oregon State Fire Marshalls Office with the Analytics and Intelligence Department at 503-934-8266.

Respectfully,

Steven C. Rhea

Fire Chief

Heppner Fire & Rescue/HRFPD”

Sam Myers Statement

The fire report we have here is a clear first hand testimony of the deadly consequences transmission lines in our area pose to dryland farmers. Idaho Power has failed to be honest in its safety assessment of this transmission line. The second fire described by our Fire Chief Rhea portrays the risk that wheat farmers like myself will face every year as harvest season plays out. We have no fire mitigation policies in place to cover the devastating costs incurred by a fire ignited by static discharge through a chaff and dust cloud produced by a harvesting combine. Idaho power has not given any real safeguards or specifications to farmers to help them be totally safe. Idaho Power suggests a combine maximum height restriction but, it is the chaff/dust cloud that creates the discharge, ie. fire, if it gets close to the transmission lines. The difficulty of predicting a wind shift (which happens daily) makes safety anywhere near the transmission line next to impossible. This story reflects a real and present danger. Stories like these play out locally but

the agencies in Salem Oregon seem to be unaware of the danger, risk and aftermath of these fire events. This is a huge problem: fires seem to reveal a large level of ignorance in the Agencies involved in approving the transmission line projects. Idaho Power wants to portray this line as safe but it is not safe in our local environment. I recommend that the transmission line gets moved south outside of farmland to preserve and protect the wildlife, cropland, and lives in this area. I implore PUC to take this threat of fire seriously, and do the due diligence that a project of this magnitude deserves, come to this area and talk to us and assess the landscape.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sam Myers

Sam Myers ,