

# WE'RE TAKING ACTION FOR SAFETY

BY TOM WALCH CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



TOM WALCH

One year ago this month, as the Pine Gulch Fire raged west of De Beque, Grand Valley Power was staring at potentially devastating damage to its distribution system. At the time, this was the largest wildfire in Colorado's history, although it was later eclipsed by two other conflagrations. While the cooperative's infrastructure was spared from significant loss, this event highlighted the prospect of future natural disasters affecting our region. Wildfires, drought, landslides and flooding are all big concerns that could bring catastrophic consequences. And this is not the first time we've had a large-scale incident either.

In 2014, the West Salt Creek Landslide claimed the lives of three Plateau Valley residents and threatened 35 homes. The slide was three miles long and descended 2,100 feet, leaving deposits of rocks and mud more than 120 feet deep.

Drought is also something of concern

to our community. According to the Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan, "Our counties, respective towns and municipalities have experienced several drought periods over time. These impacts are wide-reaching economically, environmentally and socially. The most significant impacts in Mesa County and respective jurisdictions are related to wildfire protection and agriculture." If you are following the U.S. Drought Monitor map, Mesa County is currently in extreme and exceptional drought.

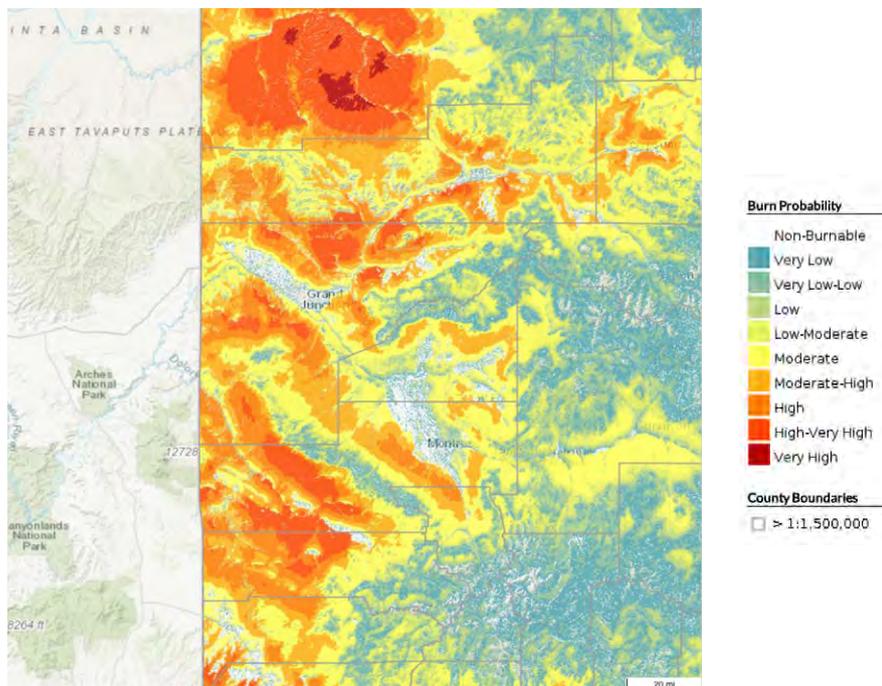
For Grand Valley Power, safety is our number one foundational principle. We are committed to the safety of our workforce and the general public. To address the threat of wildfires and extreme weather conditions, we're continually integrating new technology and expanding our maintenance programs to improve the safety and resiliency of our electric distribution grid. Our new improvements expand further on our existing preventative measures to significantly reduce the risk of

fire ignitions caused by our infrastructure.

When extended dry conditions heighten wildfire danger, we take special measures to modify our system operations. Fire prevention mode is a modified operation of our electrical equipment that supplies our members' power. This mode of operations reduces the risk of a wildfire being caused by cooperative power lines or equipment. These extra precautions will mean that our lines running to your property will trip and our linemen will do extra patrols to minimize the chance that a spark from contact with the power lines could start a fire. They visually put eyes on any system disruption before we reenergize any line. What this means is members could possibly experience longer outage times because of these precautions. What it also means is we're taking our members safety seriously.

Other improvements we have made to our vegetation management include:

- Replacing older lines with new lines utilizing materials and designs that reduce fire risk.
- Installing new equipment, including fault indicators, that will blink and identify overcurrent or problem areas.
- Increased routine line patrol and routine maintenance to avoid equipment failure.
- Adding additional protective equipment on lines to quickly isolate a line that is damaged.
- Regular evaluation of transformer



 **Colorado Wildfire Risk Viewer**  
Map from Colorado State Forest Service <https://co-pub.coloradoforestatlas.org>

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# How is Co-op Equipment Assisting with Wildfire Prevention?

BY **DANA POGAR** COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Grand Valley Power continues to take preventative measures to ensure wildfires remain a low risk throughout our service territory. Along the power lines that bring electricity to your home, Grand Valley Power installs protective devices in the form of fuses and reclosers (high-voltage circuit breakers). Fuses and reclosers serve the same purpose as the fuses and circuit breakers in your home.

A fuse is a one-shot device. When a fault occurs, the fuse blows and everyone downstream from it loses power. Reclosers are multi-shot devices, meaning they can operate a certain number of times before they stay open, and a sustained outage occurs. Typically, Grand Valley Power operates on a common setting that is known as a triple-shot. Here's how that works. A tree limb contacts the power lines and creates a fault. The recloser senses it and opens, creating the first blink.

Here's where a recloser differs from your home circuit breaker. It waits a certain amount of time (typically a few seconds), then recloses to try and complete the circuit. If the fault is still there, it opens again. This creates the second blink. Triple-shot settings allow the device to reclose a third time and if the fault is still there, it stays open and the members downstream experience a power outage. For example, if a tree branch were to brush a powerline it may trigger a blink or transient fault. In comparison, if that same branch were to fall on a powerline it would create a permanent fault and a sustained outage would occur. While the triple-shot system improves reliability and eliminates several extended outages, this system of operations can be modified during high-risk conditions.

During the summer, as temperatures rise, Grand Valley Power continues to monitor drought conditions and adjust system operations to prevent wildfires from occurring by switching co-op equipment into fire prevention mode.

Effective June 22, 2021, GVP operations modified service system-wide into fire prevention mode. By doing so, GVP can reduce the risk of a wildfire occurring from cooperative power lines or equipment. These extra precautions will mean that our lines running to your property will trip out sooner and our linemen will do extra patrols. In some high-risk areas, the one-shot method is also in effect. While we work to ensure power is safely restored, it's important for our members to also know that they are the eyes and ears we rely on as well. Please report any issues or problems you may see or hear. This vital information can help us pinpoint the causes of outages quicker. You can report this through SmartHub or by calling us at (970) 242-0040.

## WILDFIRE PREVENTION ON THE LINE

Grand Valley Power has a robust vegetation mitigation plan that maintains power reliability, community safety and prevents wildfires. Here are three ways we work to mitigate wildfires in our service territory:



### LINE PATROL

Grand Valley Power crews visually inspect over 1,600 miles of distribution line. Line patrolmen will often use their trucks to inspect power lines but in areas that are hard to reach, members may find GVP employees traveling in a side-by-side.

### TREE TRIMMING

Electric co-ops are required to maintain a minimum of 10-15 feet of clearance around power lines. Maintenance also includes frequent clearing and spraying around transmission and distribution poles and around our substations.



### RE ClosERS

A recloser acts like a circuit breaker for power lines. When a problem occurs, the recloser temporarily shuts off power. If the problem is temporary, the recloser restores power. (This is why you sometimes see the power blink.) If the problem persists, the recloser will shut off power until a crew can make repairs. The recloser's antenna provides wireless, real-time data back to the co-op.

(ANTENNA)



**Did you know?** Tree trimming arborists and right-of-way contractors work year-round to remove wildfire ignition sources by maintaining a minimum of 10-15 feet of clearance around power lines. In more forested areas, arborists may have to remove additional vegetation near electrical lines to assist with wildfire mitigation efforts.



## Decoding The Colored Utility Flags

BY CHRISTMAS WHARTON COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

At one time or another, you likely have seen those brightly colored flags placed in the grass around town or in your neighborhood. Sometimes the grass is also marked with paint. What does this mean?

It means someone in the vicinity is planning to do some digging and they called Colorado 811 to mark the areas where utilities such as gas, phone and electricity have been buried. If these lines are not marked and someone digs up a line, it could be detrimental. Prior to doing digging of any sort on your property, you must call to get "locates" of the various utilities that are underground. Failure to do this could lead to damage to an underground utility line, potential service outages, restoration costs, and physical injury or death.

Utility owners and operators follow the APWA (American Public Works Association) standard color code to mark the locations of their underground facilities. The following colors are used:

- RED – Electric Power Lines, Cables and Conduit
- YELLOW – Gas, Oil, Steam, or Petroleum
- ORANGE – Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines
- BLUE – Potable Water
- PURPLE – Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry
- GREEN – Sewers and Drain Lines
- WHITE – Proposed Excavation
- PINK – Temporary Survey Markings

### COLOR CODE FOR MARKING UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES

	PROPOSED EXCAVATION
	TEMPORARY SURVEY MARKINGS
	ELECTRIC
	GAS, OIL, STEAM
	COMMUNICATION, CATV
	POTABLE WATER
	IRRIGATION, RECLAIMED WATER, SLURRY LINES
	SEWER



Always Call Before You Dig 811 or (800) 922-1987

AT LEAST THREE BUSINESS DAYS BEFORE YOU PLAN TO DIG, MAKE YOUR LOCATE REQUEST ONLINE AT [COLORADO811.ORG](http://COLORADO811.ORG) OR MAKE REQUESTS BY CALLING 8-1-1 OR 800-922-1987.

If flags are in your yard, please do not remove them. Trust me – when I was young kid, I'd go pick them out of the ground and wave them vigorously around while skipping down the street. But discourage your young family members from doing this. If they're marked with a logo and the name of the utility, feel free to give them a call to inquire about their placement, but for safety purposes, remember to leave them where they are.

# 811 DAY

August 11 is National Safe Digging Day: #NationalSafeDiggingDay is a great reminder to always call 8-1-1 before you dig. The service is free and utilities will mark underground services so you don't accidentally dig into them. It will keep you safe and avoid an unplanned power outage!

# We're Taking Action for Safety [continued from page 5]

loading and replacing of overloaded transformers.

- In 2021, we added an additional tree trimming and arborist crew to further enhance vegetation management efforts.

You are welcome to visit our new webpage for additional information on our efforts to reduce the risk that is posed by vegetation near power lines in our service territory.

It's important for you to look around your property, as well and take advantage of resources that will help you reduce the risk of fire damage to your home and property. One of those resources is the Wildfire Risk Viewer in the CO Forest Atlas, provided

by the Colorado State Forest Service. This is a public web-mapping application that hosts numerous map layers to assess wild-fire risk, such as the burn probability map pictured on page 5. The application also allows users to identify potential fire intensity within a half-mile radius of a home, or any other point of interest on the map. A risk level description and link to additional resources is provided for users wanting to know how to reduce their risk.

Visit [gvp.org/Wildfire-Mitigation](http://gvp.org/Wildfire-Mitigation) for this tool, GVP's current vegetation practices, community resources and ways you can reduce fire risk to your home or business.

## COMMENTS TO THE CEO

You are a member of a cooperative and your opinion does count. If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please let me know by writing to Ask the CEO, P.O. Box 190, Grand Junction, CO 81502, or send an email to me at [twalch@gvp.org](mailto:twalch@gvp.org). Check out our website at [gvp.org](http://gvp.org).

## BOARD MEETING NOTICE

Grand Valley Power board meetings are open to the members, consumers and public. Regularly scheduled board meetings are held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the headquarters building located at 845 22 Road, Grand Junction, Colorado.

The monthly agenda is posted in the lobby of the headquarters building 10 days before each meeting, and posted on the GVP website. If anyone desires to address the board of directors, please let us know in advance and you will be placed on the agenda.

# GVP Awards \$2,000 Electric Lineworker Scholarship

BY DANA POGAR COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Grand Valley Power is proud to announce **Coy Sears** as this year's recipient of the Western Colorado Community College Electric Lineworker Scholarship. This year, the co-op expanded the eligibility of the lineworker scholarship to allow any resident of Mesa County who is pursuing a career in the electric lineworker industry and attending WCCC to apply. This change caught the attention of many local students and GVP received the most applications the co-op's scholarship program has ever seen. While there were many deserving applicants, Coy demonstrated strong leadership within the community and excelled in all scholarship grading requirements.

Coy graduated from Fruita Monument High School in December 2020. During his junior year of high school, Coy went to school full-time at WCCC where he became certified in emergency medical response. He was also an active member of the National

High School Rodeo Association and the Tri-County Rodeo Team for five years. During his free time, Coy volunteered for the Grand Junction Fire Department where he learned many skills that will complement his career as an electric lineworker. Please join us in congratulating Coy on this achievement.

Since 1996, Grand Valley Power has

awarded over \$230,000 to students who are continuing their education. The WCCC Electric Lineworker Scholarship is a \$2,000 one-time award. For more information on Grand Valley Power's scholarship program, visit [gvp.org/scholarship-program](http://gvp.org/scholarship-program).

WESTERN COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## 2021 LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

*Congratulations, Coy!*

**COY SEARS**  
2021 WCCC Electric Lineworker Scholarship Recipient

**GRAND VALLEY POWER**  
A Division of Colorado Energy Services  
A TrueSource Energy Cooperative

**WESTERN COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
A Division of Colorado Mesa University