

1 **Northwest Public Power Association**
2 **Resolution 2018-09**
3 **Safeguarding Local Control – FCC & Pole Attachments**
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5 **Background**
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7 Public power electric utilities, which include electric cooperatives, municipals and
8 public/people’s utility districts, are essential service providers that maintain and manage facilities
9 and infrastructure critical to the continuity of electric power system operations and to the
10 delivery of electric power to their consumers and businesses. Electric utility infrastructure and
11 facilities incorporate electrified components and should only be handled by qualified utility
12 personnel who possess significant training in electrical equipment and infrastructure.
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14 While public power utilities own and manage the utility poles within their territories, other
15 organizations and companies frequently seek access to attach their equipment and wires to
16 utility poles. Public power utilities support efforts to expand technology such as broadband or
17 5G to underserved areas, and are often service providers themselves. In other cases, public
18 power utilities willingly negotiate with telecommunications companies when those companies
19 submit applications for pole attachments to utility-owned poles.
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21 Recently, some telecommunication providers have been attempting to link pole attachment
22 requirements and rates as an impediment to broadband deployment. Many public power utilities
23 are situated in states or localities that allow them to set local market-based pole attachment fees
24 that reflect the costs associated with readying and attaching third-party facilities to existing
25 poles. However, telecommunications companies would like to bypass the local rates and impose
26 the rate the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has mandated for investor-owned utility
27 poles. The FCC’s rate would be a financial hardship for these public power utilities, requiring
28 public power utility customers to subsidize for-profit third-party companies’ pole attachments.
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30 Further, attaching entities have been known to install cables, ground conductors, or other
31 devices to public power electric utility facilities without the utility’s knowledge, that at times, has
32 endangered the electric distribution system and the professionals who maintain the electric
33 facilities. Placing additional attachments on electric facility structures adds weight and bulk which
34 can exceed original facility design, and can result in electric facility failure when combined with
35 ice, snow and/or snow loadings. It is critical for electric system integrity that each pole be
36 evaluated for suitability for attachment by utility personnel.
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39 **NWPPA's Position**

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41 • NWPPA supports public power utilities' authority to manage all matters, including electric
42 utility right-of-ways and rates, relating to attachments to poles and all other electric power
43 system equipment and facilities owned, leased and/or operated by the public power utilities.

44 • NWPPA opposes any legislation or regulation that would preempt state and local authority
45 on this issue.

46 • NWPPA opposed any legislation or regulation that would impair utilities' ability to safely
47 manage pole attachments, such as imposing deadlines to complete various steps in the pole
48 attachment review process (often called "shot clocks") and to automatically approve a
49 carrier's application if the utility fails to meet a deadline (often called "deemed approved").
50 These requirements would undermine a thorough review, putting utility employees and the
51 public at risk.

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