

1 **Northwest Public Power Association**
2 **Resolution 2019-12**
3 **In Support of Improved Efforts, by Utilities and the Federal**
4 **Government, to Respond to Natural Disasters**

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6 **Background**

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8 Each year, between 100 and 200 federal natural disasters are declared. Federal statistics show
9 that the frequency and severity of natural disasters are increasing. According to the National
10 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2017 saw record-breaking losses from
11 natural disasters, totaling \$306 billion worth of damages. By October of 2018, the U.S. saw 11
12 natural disasters totally \$1 billion each in damages. Nearly every area of the country has been
13 touched by hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, and ice storms. These events threaten loss of life
14 and property, both from the direct impact and the often extended periods before electric
15 service can be restored, disaster assistance provided, and facilities and personal property
16 rebuilt.

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18 As community-owned resources, public power utilities are committed to improving the
19 resiliency of their systems, responding expeditiously to disasters, and restoring service as
20 quickly as possible. Public power utilities also help each other—through the provision of
21 mutual aid by public power systems providing crew and equipment to repair both neighboring
22 and distant utilities.

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24 Recent experience underscores the value of mutual aid and federal disaster assistance, but also
25 highlights areas where improvements can occur, including:

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- 28 • Expand voluntary participation in, and coordination of, mutual aid efforts;
 - 29 • Improve administration of FEMA grants to reimburse utilities, which can in turn expedite
30 payments to those utilities that have provided mutual aid; and
 - 31 • Reform federal disaster assistance programs to facilitate greater focus on disaster
32 prevention, staging, system resiliency, program efficiency, and improved oversight.

33 **NWPPA's Position**

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- 35 • NWPPA supports action by Congress to reform federal disaster assistance programs to
36 enable public power utilities to use federal funds for disaster prevention and system
37 resiliency investments, expedite federal payments to utilities for both direct disaster
38 responses and mutual aid payments, and provide adequate federal funding for disaster
39 response.