



PLAYBOOK

Wildfire preparedness.

A strategic guide for
utility providers to
prepare, respond, and
communicate during
crisis events.





Turn chaos into
coordination
when every
second counts.

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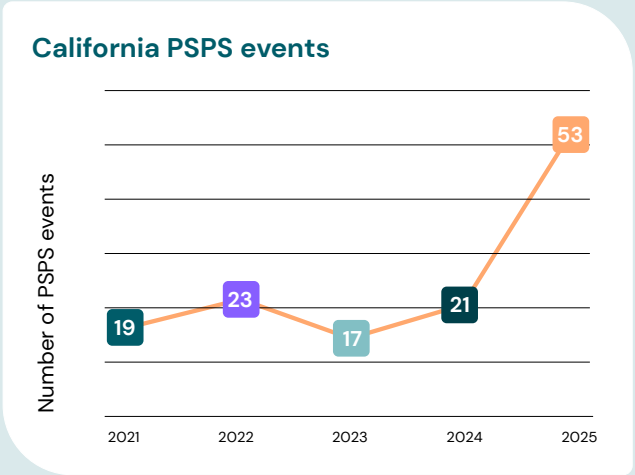
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INTRODUCTION

Across North America, wildfire events have become the most pressing severe weather threat for utility providers. In 2025, the intensity and unpredictability of wildfire seasons continue to surge, leading to extensive loss in both life and property, sweeping evacuations, and major challenges for maintaining critical infrastructure and communication.

This year alone, nearly four million acres have burned in over 44,000 wildfires nationwide, with power companies across California executing a 145% increase in planned shutoffs to safeguard communities and prevent catastrophic grid failures.¹



Wildfires pose unique risks to energy providers. High temperatures, erratic spread, and dense smoke can damage grids, substations, and generation facilities, resulting in widespread outages and disruptions that leave many customers without essential services during emergencies. The role of utilities extends beyond restoration to leading proactive, targeted communication before, during, and after fire events, protecting public safety, and building long-term resilience.²

As wildfire risks escalate year-over-year, the imperative for utility providers is clear: proactive planning, rigorous training, and the integration of advanced technologies enable utilities to minimize downtime, accelerate restoration, and support vulnerable populations when it matters most. Human-centered communication strategies, delivered across multiple channels and tailored to local needs, are essential for keeping customers informed, reducing anxiety, and empowering individuals to act throughout severe weather events. These proven protocols help maintain trust with every customer, even through the most challenging wildfire season.

At **Convey**, we partner alongside award-winning utility providers to deliver purpose-built, human-centered communication strategies for organizations of all sizes. We provide solutions that transform regulatory requirements into seamless, customer-focused experiences. We go beyond providing information; we deliver actionable insights, proven protocols, and scalable workflows that support utilities through every phase of emergencies including preparation, response, and recovery.

1

Why wildfire preparedness matters

This Wildfire Preparedness Playbook is designed as a comprehensive guide for utilities of all sizes and geographies. As you prepare for wildfires, this playbook will help you:

- Build operational resilience through **proactive protocols** and cross-functional coordination.
- **Leverage intelligent workflows** and high-throughput communication platforms for rapid, compliant outreach.
- Deliver consistent, empathetic, and **accessible messaging to diverse communities**.
- **Strengthen customer trust** and satisfaction through transparency and reliability.
- Position your organization as a **leader in disaster readiness** and community resilience.





This playbook is structured to support utilities through every stage of a crisis event, from preparation to recovery, ensuring community safety while positioning your organization as a leader in resilience and disaster readiness.

Readiness is not just about restoring power; it's about being a pillar of stability and support when customers need it most. With Convey, your utility gains a partner dedicated to modernizing operations, optimizing compliance, and setting new standards for engagement and safety in regulated environments, every step of the way.

Prepare



Respond



Recover



2

Internal utility readiness

Operational resilience to wildfires starts long before flames appear on the horizon. **Proactive wildfire protocols are essential** to prepare internal teams, minimize disruptive downtime, and accelerate restoration when every moment counts.

The impact of a major wildfire is measured not only by the destruction it leaves behind, but by the speed and efficiency with which utilities can mobilize and protect public safety, maintain essential services, and preserve trust. Utilities' performance during wildfire season is now defined by their ability to safeguard critical infrastructure, coordinate cross-functional teams, and keep communities informed under immense pressure.

Rapid, effective wildfire response begins months ahead of an incident. Building true operational resilience requires annual wildfire scenario planning, frequent all-hazards drills, technologically advanced coordination, and a workforce trained for high-risk situations. Every stage benefits from the seamless integration of robust protocols and clear roles for both personnel and technology partners.





Establish protocols



Utilities should maintain detailed, regularly updated wildfire response protocols tailored to each region's unique vegetation, weather, and infrastructure vulnerabilities. Successful protocols incorporate lessons learned from recent fire seasons and regulatory findings.

Integrate technology and train key personnel



Seamless integration of advanced technology platforms with field and operations teams enables real-time situational awareness and streamlined resource deployment. Tools like automated alerting systems, crew tracking, and digital dashboards support faster decision-making and enhance overall response capabilities.

Coordinate cross-functional teams



To operate efficiently during crisis conditions, utilities must unify decision-making structures across departments. Implementing a clear incident command structure, shared situational dashboards, and regular cross-team check-ins ensures that operations, communications, and customer support teams remain aligned throughout an event.

A well-defined incident command framework is essential:

- Clear escalation paths between operations and communications teams
- Shared situational awareness dashboards
- Biweekly check-ins with mutual aid partners to align response strategies

Prepare for public safety power shut-offs and proactive conservation appeals



Utilities in wildfire-prone regions now embed PSPS protocols and conservation appeals as core elements of their wildfire operational plans, as mandated by California regulators and the latest wildfire mitigation strategies.³

Create pre-approved, templated messages for conservation appeals and outages

Keeping a library of pre-approved, multi-channel conservation and outage messages is specifically called out as an operational best practice in both industry and regulatory publications to establish rapid, compliant customer communication during power shutoffs and wildfire-driven emergencies.



Due to high wildfire risk, a safety shutoff may occur in your zone within the next 2–4 hours. **Prepare by charging devices and keeping emergency supplies accessible.** We'll notify you as conditions change.



Conduct annual script reviews

Annual review and updating of conservation and PSPS scripts before wildfire season is best practice, to ensure up-to-date, clear, and actionable communication.



WILDFIRE SEASON UPDATE: Your area is at elevated risk. A Public Safety Power Shutoff is possible if conditions worsen. **Keep phones charged, know your evacuation routes, and follow updates from your utility.**

Educate customers on PSPS support and conservation

Use omnichannel campaigns including SMS, Digital Wallet Card for Utilities, email, IVR, and social media to inform customers about what to expect during a PSPS event, share available resources for vulnerable populations, and provide practical conservation actions they can take when wildfire risk or system demand is high.



PEAK DEMAND ALERT: Please reduce electricity use between 4–9 PM today to help stabilize the grid. Small steps—like adjusting your thermostat or delaying major appliance use—make a big difference. Thank you for supporting your community.

Prioritize staff well-being and resilience



Recognizing the physical and emotional demands of wildfire response, utilities should prioritize employee well-being by offering mental health resources, resilience training, and fatigue management protocols. Supporting staff helps maintain high performance during prolonged or high-stress events.



Establish mutual aid and resourcing frameworks

Building and periodically updating mutual aid agreements with neighboring utilities is essential for rapid deployment of additional crews, equipment, and technical expertise during large-scale wildfires or PSPS events. However, true resilience also means working hand-in-hand with trusted local partners, community organizations, city and county emergency management, public health agencies, and faith-based/volunteer networks. Utilities that embed themselves in local resilience coalitions improve both operational outcomes and community trust.



During the Palisades Fire of January 2025 in Los Angeles, utilities activated mutual aid with regional partners, while deep collaboration with the City of Los Angeles, county health agencies, the American Red Cross, and local nonprofits ensured a unified, community-centered response. These partnerships enabled fast coordination for resource distribution, shelter operations, wellness checks, and transportation support for vulnerable populations. By working side-by-side with local organizations in crisis moments, utilities can cement their reputation as a trusted, responsive community ally when it matters most. ⁴



3

Technology integration for crisis efficiency

Convey's solutions are purpose-built to help utilities achieve operational excellence during emergencies by combining speed, scalability, and regulatory compliance with a human-centered approach. Leverage Convey's intelligent workflows for rapid, compliant messaging:



Conduct wildfire drills and scenario simulations

Utilities across California and the West routinely run scenario-planning sessions annually to validate rapid notification systems, message templates, and cross-functional responses for PSPS and wildfire evacuations, incorporating realistic triggers, operational workflows, and large-scale messaging to customer segments.⁵

Utilities should conduct annual and pre-season drills specific to wildfire emergencies and high-impact events, such as fast-moving wildfires, multi-day grid outages, or large-scale public safety power shutoff scenarios. These exercises are essential for validating:

- Emergency wildfire communication workflows
- Cross-agency mutual aid coordination
- System failover and resilience capabilities

PRO TIP

Demonstrating compliance through proactive customer communication strengthens trust with both regulators and the communities you serve.



Orchestrate rapid, omnichannel wildfire alerts

Real-time SMS, email, voice, and chat capabilities enable utilities to broadcast urgent evacuation notices, shutoff warnings, and status updates across all customer segments when wildfires threaten infrastructure or communities.



Automate and scale emergency communications

With pre-loaded NERC/FERC-approved scripts and automated compliance checks, utilities can send crisis alerts in under two minutes and deliver over one million notifications per hour. Intelligent pacing algorithms prevent system overload, ensuring all messages are delivered.



Tailor messaging to wildfire-specific risk zones

Convey's dynamic segmentation targets messages by evacuation status, location, grid vulnerability, or language preference, making sure customers in high-risk areas receive tailored, accessible alerts that cut through the noise during multi-incident fire seasons.



Deploy chatbots and digital self-service for wildfire FAQs

Digital channels employing AI-powered, two-way conversation chatbots help manage surge volumes, guide customers to safety resources, and reduce call center strain, enabling live agents to focus on the most complex cases during major wildfire events.



4

Building trust through transparency and consistency



Consistent, transparent communication is the foundation of customer trust during wildfire crisis events. Drawing on best practices from industry leaders, Convey helps utilities provide proactive, consistent updates throughout an emergency.

Proactive, reliable updates throughout the entire wildfire lifecycle not only keep customers informed but also transform challenging circumstances into opportunities to strengthen relationships and build lasting credibility.

Best practices in trust-building communication include:



Proactive updates. Customers should never be left wondering about the status of their service or restoration efforts. Regular, scheduled updates, delivered even when there is no new information, provide reassurance and demonstrate the utility's commitment to transparency.



Set clear expectations and deliver on promises. If customers are told they will receive an update within a certain timeframe, it is critical to deliver on that promise. This reliability, even in the face of uncertainty, establishes the utility as a dependable partner.



Proactively maintain customer readiness

Year-round campaigns to prompt customers to update contact information and preferences, subscribe to notifications, or access fire season preparedness content before the next wildfire threat arrives creates trust with customers and sets your utility up to be seen as a reliable leader in the community when disaster strikes.



Capacity management of alerts by outage severity and dynamic segmentation

Real-time prioritization based on location, language preference, and vulnerability status means that Convey can deliver a targeted approach, maximize operational efficiency, and ensure that the most critical updates are delivered to those who need them first.



Operational visibility and performance monitoring

Convey's technology provides real-time dashboards that display message volume, segmentation breakdowns, and delivery success rates. This transparency empowers utility teams to monitor campaign effectiveness, adjust strategies on the fly, and ensure continuous improvement in crisis communications.

By integrating these advanced technology solutions, utilities can respond to emergencies with speed, precision, and empathy, delivering the right message to the right people at the right time.



Empathetic, human-centered messaging. Communications should acknowledge the stress and inconvenience caused by wildfires, expressing empathy and understanding for customers' situations. This human-centered approach fosters goodwill and reduces frustration.



Omnichannel delivery for accessibility. Utilizing a mix of channels, such as SMS, email, voice calls, mobile apps, and digital signage, ensuring that all customer segments, including those who are vulnerable or have accessibility needs, receive timely and relevant information.



Clear, transparent information about restoration. Provide clear, honest information about restoration timelines and the challenges crews are facing. This includes daily status updates, explanations of restoration priorities, and dedicated support for customers with critical needs.



Dedicated support for vulnerable customers. Give special attention to those who rely on electricity for medical equipment or who may be at greater risk during outages to make sure they receive tailored communications and prioritized restoration.

CASE IN POINT:

During the January 2025 Palisades Fire in Los Angeles County, communication failures, including damaged towers and strained coordination between emergency teams, caused delays and confusion as the blaze burned nearly 23,000 acres and threatened tens of thousands of residents. After-action reviews highlighted the critical need for robust, redundant emergency communication systems and clearly defined escalation protocols. In response, agencies accelerated upgrades for interoperable messaging platforms, command dashboards, and multi-channel public alerting to ensure that utility customers and first responders will receive timely, accessible, and accurate wildfire updates in future incidents.⁶

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR UTILITIES:

- Make communication a **core part of your wildfire response strategy.**
- Develop a robust **library of scenario-based messages** to cover every phase of a wildfire, from initial red flag warnings and evacuation notices to restoration and repopulation updates.
- Invest in **technology that enables rapid, targeted outreach and supports two-way engagement**, empowering customers to ask questions or report emerging hazards in real time during wildfire emergencies.
- **Train teams** to respond with empathy and clarity, while creating a consistent, trusted brand voice at every customer touchpoint throughout wildfire season.

By prioritizing consistency and transparency, utilities can not only manage expectations and reduce anxiety during severe weather events but also reinforce their reputation as trusted partners in community resilience and safety.



5

Keeping customers informed ahead of wildfire threats

Before wildfire season or when fire risk is elevated, utilities should distribute a comprehensive wildfire preparedness checklist to customers via all channels, including SMS, email, app push, and web portals. Guarantee all materials are accessible and meet ADA guidelines for customers with disabilities, following best practices from top agencies and recent wildfire case studies.

See page 34 of this playbook for client-facing messaging suggestions.

Comprehensive messaging cadence

- **Omnichannel delivery** (SMS, RBM, email, IVR, app notifications, and digital signage) ensures maximum reach, with smart targeting based on fire risk zone, customer type, language, and vulnerability status allows for targeted, actionable messaging for each audience.
- Leverage tools like **Convey's Digital Wallet Card** to deliver personalized preparedness checklists, safety alerts, and emergency resources directly to the customer's smartphone. With adoption rates up to 60% and push notification open rates nearing 90%, this channel ensures critical wildfire information is accessible, even as conditions rapidly evolve.



Recommended messaging cadence

Utilities can streamline communication by using pre-approved, event-specific messages.

Wildfire season or regular communications to high-risk locations

- Send wildfire preparation checklists (defensible space guidance, N95 masks, backup battery power, evacuation routes, medication refills, pet evacuation plans, important documents, etc.).
- Share property protection tips (removing flammable brush, clearing gutters, sealing vents, fire-resistant landscaping).
- Advise on energy conservation to minimize grid strain before and during major fire weather.

Red flag warnings or active fires arise

- Issue evacuation of readiness alerts, air quality guidance, generator safety reminders, and information on shelters.
- Prompt customers to charge devices, update emergency contacts, and enroll in alerts.
- Provide real-time evacuation or shelter-in-place notifications with clear, location-specific guidance and resource contacts.

See page 34 'Recommended customer-facing communications' for examples of messages and campaigns that can be leveraged.





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Real-time communication during the wildfire

When crisis strikes, utilities must prioritize safety, clarity, and transparency in every customer interaction. The ability to deliver timely, accurate, and empathetic communications, at scale and across multiple channels, is essential for protecting lives, maintaining trust, and supporting operational efficiency.

Omnichannel messaging for all segments, that meets customers where they are



Different customer segments respond to different channels. Utilities should deploy an omnichannel communication strategy to make sure every customer receives critical updates in their preferred format:

- **SMS:** Delivers immediate, high-open-rate alerts, which is ideal for urgent safety and restoration updates. SMS is especially valuable for customers who are hard of hearing or have speech disabilities, providing clear, accessible information without relying on audio.
- **IVR/Voice calls:** Effective for seniors, customers with visual impairments, or those who prefer auditory updates.
- **Email:** Best for detailed and longer updates, safety tips, and resource links.
- **App or Push notifications and digital signage:** Provide real-time information in public areas, shelters, and community centers.

Messages should be automatically routed based on customer preferences, ensuring the right information reaches the right audience at the right time.

See page 34 "Recommended customer-facing communications" for examples of messages and campaigns that can be leveraged.

Proactive, personalized, and inclusive messaging



No two communities are the same. It is important to guarantee that there is equitable access to information by supporting translation and accessibility features. Convey's solutions empower utilities to deliver warnings and restoration updates to millions, enhancing trust and operational agility during wildfire emergencies.

Convey's key capabilities include:

Language-specific messaging

All notifications are automatically translated into each recipient's preferred language so that non-English speakers receive timely, accurate information. This feature is critical for reaching linguistically diverse communities and meeting regulatory requirements.

Segmentation and location-based features

Alerts are tailored by location, customer role, or community, so the right people get the right information at the right time. Utilities can target specific neighborhoods, business districts, or vulnerable populations, increasing the relevance and effectiveness of each message.

Prioritize safety and transparency. Location-based wildfire alerts should direct customers away from hazards and provide clear evacuation or safety instructions, for example:



WILDFIRE WARNING: Fast-moving wildfire near Oak Valley. Evacuate immediately via Highway 17. Avoid smoke-filled areas. For shelter info or help, **call 1-800-UTILITY**.

This type of messaging gives customers clear, actionable steps directly linked to their location and the evolving wildfire threat, helping protect lives and facilitate safe evacuation or shelter-in-place decisions.



Accessibility and equity for all

It is essential to adhere to accessibility standards (including ADA compliance) so all customers, regardless of ability, can understand and act on critical updates. Utilities must ensure their communication strategies are accessible to all, including customers who are hard of hearing, visually impaired, or have limited English proficiency.

- **SMS messaging** is particularly beneficial for customers who are hard of hearing or have speech disabilities, as text-based alerts provide clear, accessible information without relying on audio.
- **IVR and voice calls** should be used for those who prefer or require auditory updates, such as older adults or those with visual impairments.
- **App or push notifications and digital signage** are for real-time updates in public spaces, shelters, and community centers.
- **Translation and ADA-compliant** formatting must be utilized so that all customers receive actionable, understandable information.

EXAMPLE MESSAGES

SAFETY
ALERT



EMERGENCY: Wildfire is approaching [Your Neighborhood]. Evacuate now using Route 93. Need assistance? Reply **HELP** or **call 1-800-UTILITY**.

OUTAGE
UPDATE



WILDFIRE UPDATE: Crews are working to restore power in your area. Estimated restoration: 6:30 PM. **Reply 1** if power is on, **2** if you still have an outage. For generator safety tips, say **TIPS** or **press 2**.

CHECK IN



Are you safe and able to evacuate? Reply **YES** if safe, **EVAC** if you need help leaving, or **HELP** for urgent medical needs.

Two-way engagement

A modern wildfire communication strategy must go beyond one-way alerts in order to empower customers to respond, report emergencies, and interact directly with their utility in real time. Utilities that offer two-way SMS, app-based messaging, or online forms enable customers to:

- **Report wildfire hazards** (such as new fire outbreaks, smoke, or downed lines), enabling faster crew dispatch and improved emergency situational awareness.
- **Confirm their safety or request evacuation support**, allowing utilities and agencies to prioritize outreach to medically vulnerable, elderly, or isolated individuals.
- **Receive personalized restoration estimates and emergency updates** specific to their address, neighborhood, or risk zone, critical during targeted power shutoffs or evacuations.

According to industry research, utilities that support two-way engagement report 6%–15% higher customer satisfaction scores, significantly faster incident resolution, and better operational visibility during wildfires and outages. For example, after adopting interactive SMS and digital support channels, business satisfaction with utilities rose by 30 points (on a 1,000-point scale) and residential satisfaction surged when customers could ask questions or give feedback during fire-driven outages.⁷

SAMPLE TWO-WAY
MESSAGING WORKFLOW:

OUTAGE OR
EMERGENCY
NOTIFICATION



WILDFIRE THREAT ALERT: Service is interrupted in your area to protect community safety. **Reply OUT** if you are currently without power, **SAFE** if your power is on, or **HELP** if you need evacuation or medical assistance.

ADDRESS
OR STATUS
VERIFICATION



To provide fire zone updates, **reply YES** if you are at [address], or **NO** if you are at a different evacuation location. If you have left the area, reply **EVAC**.

FEEDBACK
COLLECTION



How satisfied are you with our updates?
Reply 1 (Very Satisfied) to **5** (Very Dissatisfied).



Convey's two-way engagement capabilities transform wildfire emergency response from a one-way alert system into a dynamic, customer-driven conversation. Benefits of two-way engagement:



Faster damage assessment

When customers can quickly report outages, downed lines, or hazards via SMS, RBM, or chatbots, utilities gain immediate, location-specific insights. This crowdsourced data helps dispatch crews more efficiently, prioritize restoration efforts, and reduce downtime for affected areas.



Enhanced customer safety and welfare

Two-way communication allows utilities to check in with customers, especially those identified as vulnerable or medically dependent. Customers can easily confirm their status or request urgent assistance, enabling utilities to proactively identify and support those most at risk during severe weather.



Continuous feedback loop

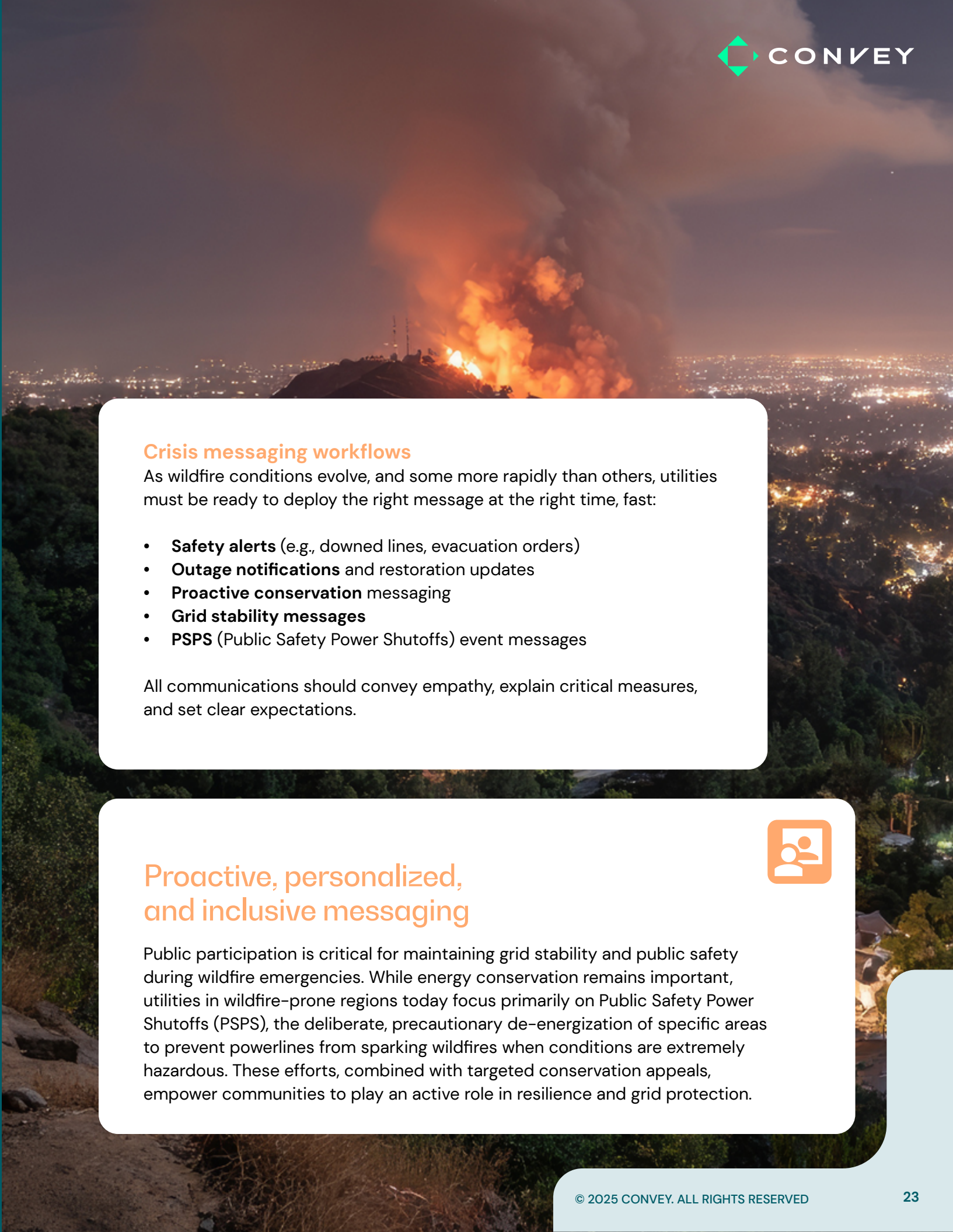
Real-time customer feedback, such as restoration confirmations, satisfaction ratings, or communication preferences, enables utilities to refine their messaging cadence, content, and channel mix on the fly. This adaptability means that communications remain relevant, timely, and accessible throughout the wildfire lifecycle.



Building trust and transparency

By inviting and acting on customer input, utilities demonstrate responsiveness and accountability, strengthening trust and fostering a sense of partnership with the community.

Convey's solutions make two-way engagement seamless and scalable, supporting millions of interactions without delay. Whether it's collecting outage reports, sending wellness check-ins, or gathering feedback on communication effectiveness, Convey helps utilities stay connected to their customers, every step of the way.



Crisis messaging workflows

As wildfire conditions evolve, and some more rapidly than others, utilities must be ready to deploy the right message at the right time, fast:

- **Safety alerts** (e.g., downed lines, evacuation orders)
- **Outage notifications** and restoration updates
- **Proactive conservation** messaging
- **Grid stability messages**
- **PSPS** (Public Safety Power Shutoffs) event messages

All communications should convey empathy, explain critical measures, and set clear expectations.



Proactive, personalized, and inclusive messaging

Public participation is critical for maintaining grid stability and public safety during wildfire emergencies. While energy conservation remains important, utilities in wildfire-prone regions today focus primarily on Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), the deliberate, precautionary de-energization of specific areas to prevent powerlines from sparking wildfires when conditions are extremely hazardous. These efforts, combined with targeted conservation appeals, empower communities to play an active role in resilience and grid protection.



Types of critical communications during wildfire season



Conservation appeal

When extreme wildfire risk overlaps with heat waves or high grid demand, utilities may still ask customers to voluntarily conserve electricity. These appeals help reduce stress on the system and may mitigate or delay the need for broader safety actions.

The best practice is always to start with conservation messaging, making clear what actions customers can take and why it matters for public safety.

EXAMPLE MESSAGE:



Extreme wildfire conditions combined with high energy demand are straining the grid. **Please help by lowering your electricity usage now:** raise thermostats, turn off non-essential lights and appliances, and avoid running washers/dryers. Your actions help protect community safety and essential services. **More tips:** [utility URL]

Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) notifications

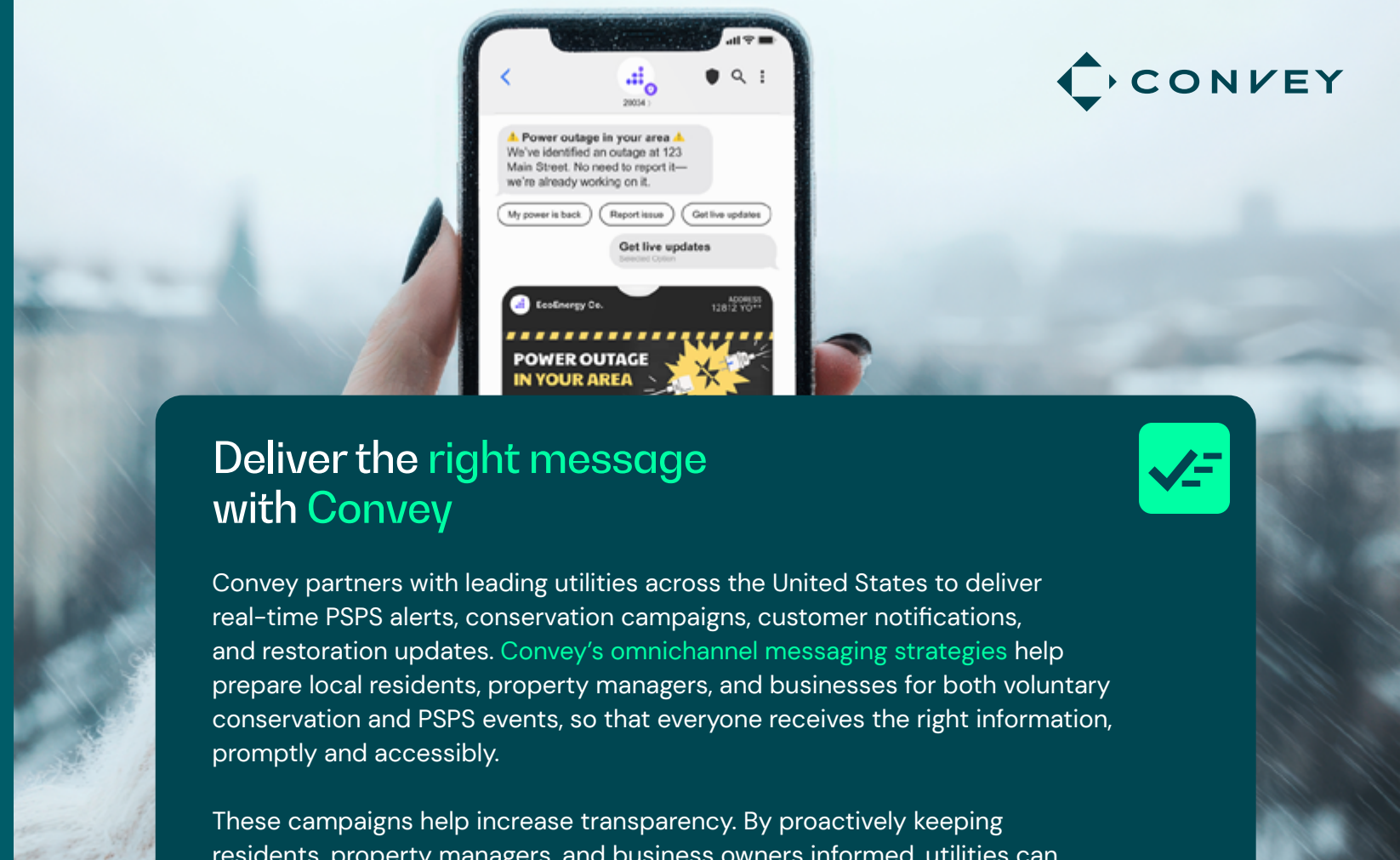
When wildfire risk becomes severe and conditions meet regulatory thresholds, utilities may implement a PSPS event, even if customers are already conserving. PSPS is not about supply shortage, it is a last-resort public safety measure to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

It is essential to provide timely and clear warnings, explain the safety rationale, and keep customers updated throughout the duration of the shutoff.

EXAMPLE MESSAGE:



WILDFIRE ALERT: To protect lives and property, we may temporarily turn off power in your area (PSPS) when fire risk is high. We will notify you in advance if your address is affected, with ongoing updates on restoration. **Visit [utility URL]** to prepare and register for support if you have medical or accessibility needs.



Deliver the right message with Convey



Convey partners with leading utilities across the United States to deliver real-time PSPS alerts, conservation campaigns, customer notifications, and restoration updates. **Convey's omnichannel messaging strategies** help prepare local residents, property managers, and businesses for both voluntary conservation and PSPS events, so that everyone receives the right information, promptly and accessibly.

These campaigns help increase transparency. By proactively keeping residents, property managers, and business owners informed, utilities can reduce disruption and enable faster, safer recoveries, particularly during events that require such efforts.

Suggested messages include:

- **Raise thermostats to 78°F** or higher during extreme heat to reduce HVAC load.
- **Delay large appliance use** such as washers, dryers, and ovens until off-peak hours.
- **Unplug electronics** that draw "phantom load" even when not in use.
- **Use ceiling fans** to circulate air instead of lowering the thermostat.
- **Turn off unnecessary lighting** in unoccupied rooms to save power.

These small actions, when adopted collectively, reduce strain on the grid and foster a sense of shared responsibility in preserving essential services. By communicating these efforts proactively, especially surrounding PSPS events, utilities can strengthen public understanding, foster cooperation, and reinforce trust during high-stakes moments.

Convey ensures that these messages reach the right audiences quickly and reliably, offering utilities a powerful toolkit to manage energy emergencies while building lasting community engagement.

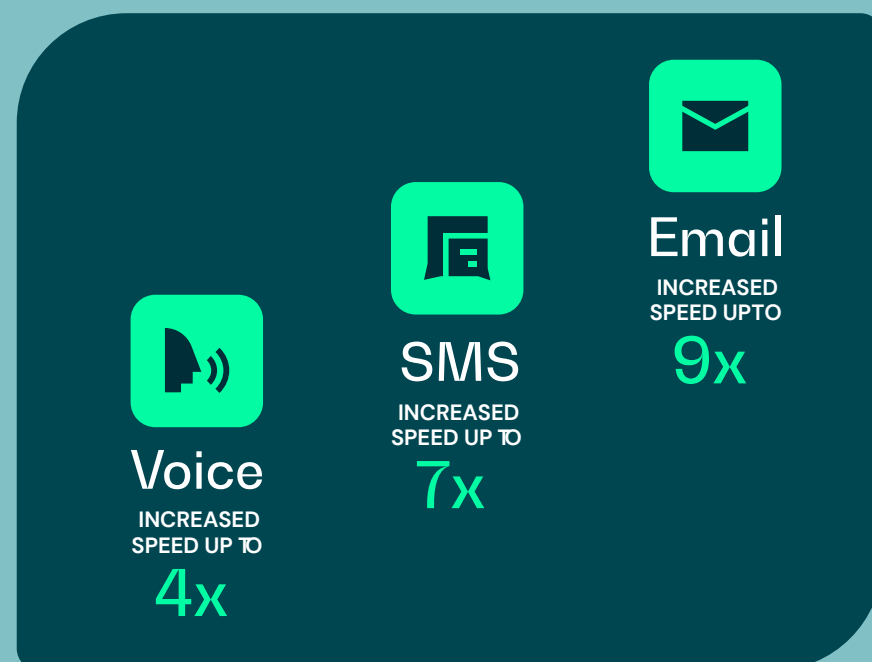


7

Real-time, High Throughput communication



Convey's intelligent workflows enable utilities to automate the deployment of safety alerts, outage notifications, and restoration updates as conditions evolve. Our High Throughput technology can reach over one million recipients within minutes, meaning critical information is delivered even during network congestion or peak demand.



By maintaining a disciplined, human-centered communication strategy during wildfires, supported by two-way engagement, accessible channels, and High Throughput automation, utilities can reduce confusion, accelerate restoration, and reinforce their role as trusted partners in community safety and resilience. This approach, validated by leading utilities and industry research, sets a new standard for customer engagement during severe emergencies.

8

Restoration & recovery evaluation with customer engagement

Once a wildfire threat passes or after a PSPS event ends, utilities must move swiftly to assess infrastructure for damage, restore service, and closely review the effectiveness of their wildfire response. Convey can support this process by delivering critical analytics and enabling responsive customer outreach tailored for wildfire and PSPS recovery.

Key metrics may include:

- Damage assessment and restoration sequencing to **deploy AI-powered tools** for rapid assessment and real-time data collection. Prioritize restoration for critical infrastructure, then high-density residential clusters, then rural areas.
- Ongoing customer updates to maintain a **steady cadence of communications** about restoration progress, safety reminders, and billing or service support for impacted customers (such as pauses or deferred payments). Use pre-approved templates for post-event messaging, including "all clear" notices and return-to-service instructions.
- **Community support and resource coordination in partnership with Red Cross**, and local agencies to distribute resources and information about shelters, food, and mental health services.
- **Enable two-way messaging for reporting** ongoing hazards or requesting additional support.

Collecting and analyzing this data helps identify areas for improvement and strengthens strategies for future events. Utilities are encouraged to share findings with peers and regulators to promote broader resilience.

After wildfire events or prolonged outages, clear communication about service restoration, billing pauses, payment relief, and extra support is essential for rebuilding customer confidence and trust.



Rate changes and impact of wildfires financially

Major wildfires and PSPS events can disrupt service and create financial stress for customers. Utilities are required by state policy (e.g., CPUC Disaster Relief Consumer Protections) to pause billing, prevent disconnections for nonpayment, offer payment plans, and deliver clear, proactive communication about all available assistance for wildfire-impacted customers.⁹

Through AMI data and personalized notifications, utilities can monitor usage, identify high bill risk, and deliver bill alerts or flexible payment information to those affected, especially in high-impact and vulnerable areas. Convey's AI-based billing analytics tool can help with transparent billing changes and targeted support options, essential for maintaining customer trust during wildfire and PSPS recovery.

SAMPLE BILLING MESSAGE:



We've paused billing and late fees for wildfire impacted customers. If you need flexible payment options or bill support, please **call [number]** or **visit [link]**. For financial and community assistance, see **[resource URL]**.

Utilities should always ensure accessibility, translation, and updates for billing support campaigns post-wildfires comply with customer protection rules and build long-term confidence. Above all, transparency about billing impacts is key to building lasting customer loyalty and confidence in utility wildfire response.

9

Continuous improvement and optimization

EVERY EVENT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE.

Performance analysis



Audit message delivery metrics, customer engagement rates, and call center volumes to identify gaps and successes. Compare predicted vs. actual restoration timelines; review incident command and escalation protocols.

Customer feedback and NPS



Conduct post-event surveys such as NPS or CSAT to understand customer perception and trust drivers. Use feedback to refine messaging cadence, script content, and communication workflows.

Template library and scenario expansion



Update and expand the messaging library annually by adding new scenarios like wildfires, winter storms, cyber threats, etc. Continue to refine based on regulatory changes and customer feedback.



10

Quick round-up of best practices and **key takeaways**



1

Start early with pre-wildfire season communication.

Launch preparedness campaigns before fire weather arrives; share safety checklists, encourage signups for emergency notifications, and promote defensible space and evacuation planning.

2

Maintain consistent, scenario-based messaging cadence.

Coordinate messaging for each phase: pre-fire risk (education and preparation), active events (alerts, evacuation, grid safety, resource access), and post-event (restoration, support, billing, and resiliency resources).

3

Test, train, and refine regularly.

Conduct full-scale wildfire event drills, scenario testing, and internal reviews to validate emergency plans and workflows, including communication with mutual aid partners and local authorities.

4

Humanize every interaction and center empathy, clarity, and trust. Ensure every customer message is accessible, empathetic, and relevant, addressing the anxiety, displacement, and needs associated with wildfires (especially for medically vulnerable or non-English speaking customers).

6

Integrate digital support tools and live resources. Provide two-way, 24/7 FAQ chatbots on wildfires, outage maps, shelter info, billing support, and direct connections to utility support teams or emergency aid agencies.

8

Coordinate with local agencies and recovery partners.

Work proactively with first responders, health agencies, and community groups to share shelter information, food/water distribution, air quality alerts, and mental health resources post-fire.

5

Leverage smart technology for outreach and feedback.

Use advanced workflows for segmentation, automation, and rapid communication (across SMS, email, voice, app, and web), and enable two-way engagement so customers can report hazards, request evacuation help, or give safety check-ins.

7

Promote digital self-service for real-time wildfire response and recovery.

Offer digital dashboards or portals for outage status, PSPS notices, restoration estimates, account support, payment relief, and rapid aid registration.



11

Conclusion

You can't control when wildfires strike but you can control the communication. **Proactive outreach is your most powerful tool.**



Utilities are the backbone of community resilience during wildfires and extreme weather. Each disaster, be it wildfire, heat wave, hurricane, or flood, reminds us that nature's unpredictability is a constant in the utility industry and underscores the importance of anticipation, clear communication, and customer empowerment.

What distinguishes leading utilities is the ability to prepare, anticipate, communicate, and empower communities before, during, and after disaster strikes. Proactive, transparent communication is the single most effective tool utilities must use to protect customers, support first responders, and strengthen public trust.

By leveraging advanced technology, omnichannel outreach, and inclusive messaging, utilities can ensure that every customer, regardless of location, language, or ability and receives timely, actionable information when it matters most.

This playbook has demonstrated that operational excellence is built on:

- **Preparedness** that includes investing in robust protocols, regular drills, and mutual aid partnerships to guarantee readiness for any scenario.
- **Technology** that deploys intelligent workflows and High Throughput platforms delivering millions of alerts, segmented audiences, and automated compliance.
- **Customer-centric messaging** prioritizing accessibility, empathy, and clarity in every message, and tailoring communications to the needs of diverse communities.
- **Two-way engagement** that sets customers up to feel more empowered by reporting outages, requesting assistance, and providing real-time feedback, creating a continuous loop of information that accelerates restoration and improves safety.
- **Ongoing improvement by auditing every event**, analyzing performance data, and refining strategies to set new standards for utility wildfire response.

As a utility leader, your commitment to proactive outreach is more than a regulatory requirement; it is a **cornerstone of community resilience**. By framing preparedness guidance and fostering a culture of trust, you empower customers to take meaningful action and reinforce your organization's role as a reliable partner in times of crisis.

The future of utility wildfire response is clear:

- **Anticipate threats**, communicate early, and maintain a steady cadence of updates.
- **Leverage every channel** such as SMS, IVR, email, apps, and digital signage to maximize reach and accessibility.
- **Embrace innovation and feedback**, always striving to improve the customer experience.

While you can't control when a wildfire strikes, **you can control the message**. With every alert sent, every update shared, and every question answered, you are not just restoring power; you are restoring confidence, safety, and hope for the communities you serve.

Be the utility your customers can count on. Ready to transform your wildfire response across the full lifecycle?





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Recommended customer-facing communications

Customer-facing preparedness



Demonstrate a commitment to your customers' well-being by delivering clear, practical resources and tips, showing that you have their back not just through the service you provide, but by supporting them through what's to come.

To strengthen customer preparedness and safety, utilities are encouraged to leverage customers' preferred communication channels to deliver proactive, prompt, and practical information. Consider including the following types of messages in your outreach strategy to ensure your audience receives the support and guidance they need to feel supported and connected:

Deliver clear, practical resources and tips:



- **Send targeted wildfire prep checklists** and **early alerts** directly to customers via SMS, digital wallet, and app notifications, ensuring resources are at their fingertips, even in power loss scenarios.
- **Encourage monitoring of local news, official emergency apps** (such as NOAA, Ready.gov, or local wildfire alerts), and social channels for real-time updates.
- **Advise customers to write down emergency contacts** and vital information, so it remains accessible if devices lose power.
- Remind customers to **keep phones, battery packs, and medical devices fully charged** ahead of fire weather, and share digital "How to Prepare" resources that can be saved or downloaded for offline access.
- **Share clear information about local evacuation zones**, shelter options, transportation resources, and air quality warnings, providing links or map snapshots through digital channels.
- Suggest that customers **review insurance policies and keep important documents up to date** and easily accessible.
- Use tools like **Convey's Digital Wallet Card** to update customers instantly about evacuation periods, PSPS events, and community recovery resources, with tap-to-access instructions, FAQs, and push notifications on their mobile devices.



Wildfire go bag checklist (customer-facing example)



DISTRIBUTE CHECKLISTS VIA SMS/EMAIL:

- 3-day supply of non-perishable food and 3 gallons of water per person
- Map with at least 2 evacuation routes marked
- Necessary medications and prescription refills (with dosing instructions)
- Copies of important documents (ID, birth certificate, medical info, insurance, property/title records)
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
- Portable phone charger, backup battery bank, wired charging cords
- Extra set of car keys, credit/debit cards, and cash/traveler's checks
- Change of clothes, sturdy shoes, gloves, and weather-appropriate layers/blankets
- First aid kit and sanitation/hygiene supplies
- Face coverings and N95 masks for smoke
- Glasses/contacts and supplies, hearing aids and batteries if needed
- Pet and livestock food, water, medications, leashes/carriers
- Emergency contact list, written down and saved digitally
- Family photos, laptops/drives, sentimental items if time allows
- Any special items for infants, seniors, or those with disabilities

PRO TIP

Encourage customers to keep "go bags" in vehicles and ensure at least half a tank of gas during fire season

You can adapt and brand this checklist for your utility, offer it as a digital wallet card/download, or use in omnichannel educational campaigns for wildfire season.



Property protection tips

Share wildfire-specific property preparation steps with customers and partners before and during fire season:

- Maintain defensible space: Clear at least 30 feet of flammable vegetation and debris from around homes and buildings, in line with CAL FIRE and Red Cross guidelines.
- Remove dead plants, dry leaves, pine needles, and branches from the yard, roof, gutters, and under decks.
- Relocate combustible outdoor items (furniture, grills, toys, wood piles, propane tanks) away from structures and under eaves.
- Trim tree limbs at least 10 feet from chimneys and rooflines and remove overhanging branches.
- Install metal mesh screens over vents to prevent embers from entering the home.
- Seal gaps, replace weather stripping, and close doors and windows to reduce smoke and embers entering the property.
- Prepare fire-resistant landscaping in buffer zones and remove combustible mulch near foundations.
- Ensure fire extinguishers, garden hoses, and water sources are accessible and tested.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Individuals with disabilities

Proactively plan for accessible evacuation, medication needs, and power backup for essential medical equipment.

Property managers and businesses

- Create and practice wildfire business continuity plans, including emergency contacts, staff roles, and vendor coordination.
- Maintain up-to-date building lists and evacuation plans, provide fire "go bags" for staff, and review insurance documentation.
- Assess building egress routes and defensible space for multi-family and high-occupancy sites.



Post-wildfire return and safety messaging



- Do not return until officials provide an all-clear; wildfires may leave hotspots or unsafe conditions behind.
- Inspect for structural damage, lingering embers, gas leaks, and damaged electrical lines before reoccupying or reopening businesses.
- Avoid and report downed lines, damaged service connections, or gas leaks to your utility or 911, do not attempt repairs yourself.
- Do not use generators, barbecues, or open flames indoors due to fire and CO poisoning risks.

SAMPLE MESSAGE:



Before returning, ensure the area is declared safe, check for embers, downed lines, or hazardous gas smells, and **call [utility emergency contact]** if you notice any dangers. For more support, **visit [utility URL]** or use your digital wallet card to access real-time recovery resources.

By leveraging Convey's platform, utilities can ensure these essential messages reach the right audiences at the right time, building trust and supporting community resilience throughout the wildfire lifecycle.

Energy conservation during wildfires or PSPS



- Raise thermostats, unplug idle devices, limit use of large appliances, and close blinds to reduce grid stress and help prevent unplanned power disruptions.
- Delay high-energy activities until after peak demand or restoration, especially as smoke and heat drive up demand.
- Promote use of battery banks and encourage advanced device charging before PSPS or wildfire threats to ensure communication access.
- Share info on utility rebates for energy-saving upgrades that support wildfire and grid resiliency.

How prepared is your organization?

Wildfires aren't just a seasonal risk; they are a new reality. To stay ahead, ask yourself these 7 questions and get your customers and teams ready for whatever the season brings:

1. **Are we communicating with customers before, during, and after wildfire threats**, using channels they trust, like SMS, email, mobile apps, and digital wallet cards?
2. **Do our messages go beyond service updates to offer clear, step-by-step guidance for safety**, evacuation, and wildfire prep, not just the basics?
3. **Is our wildfire communication plan up-to-date**, tested, and strengthened with smart technology that delivers rapid, large-scale, and compliant messaging?
4. **Have we truly tailored our outreach for at-risk populations**, meeting language preferences and accessibility needs in every campaign?
5. **Are we equipping customers with tips to conserve energy**, stay resilient, and support grid safety when wildfire risk is highest?
6. **Can our system gather real-time feedback and safety reports from the field**, empowering faster, smarter responses when it matters most?
7. **After each wildfire emergency, are we reviewing performance, listening to customer feedback**, and refining our approach for next time?



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Resources and references



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