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Oregon Bill Would Grant Utilities Immunity From Wildfire Lawsuits.

The bill calls on utilities to meet wildfire protection standards. In return, they'd gain legal protection.

A bill that would establish minimum wildfire prevention standards for electric utilities in exchange for an annual certificate from the Oregon Public Utility Commission could give them immunity from being held accountable in lawsuits, lawyers say.

If passed, House Bill 3666 would give utilities a state-sanctioned defense against lawsuits when their equipment starts fires, leaving customers holding the bag for damages caused by multi-billion dollar companies that provide electricity to nearly 75 percent of Oregonians, lawyers and survivors warn.

Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, filed the bill Tuesday to create standards for wildfire prevention work undertaken by utilities. That would result in safer communities and help the utilities stay insured by avoiding costly lawsuits, she said.

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