

WA PUD Association (Travis Nelson)

The storm that hit the Pacific Northwest this past weekend (October 25-26, 2025), resulted in over 200,000 customers losing power in the area and caused localized urban flooding in several communities from storm debris blocking drainage systems.

Restoration of these systems was critical to citizens in our region for safety and restoration of basic services. These restoration efforts were made possible through the hard work of our dedicated public servants who are the "First Responders" when the storms take out power and block our drainage systems. Like our Police and Fire services, the electricity and stormwater professionals rely on vehicles that can withstand the elements and time duration required to restore services and safety without the additional constraints from equipment failure. As such, just as the law provides exemptions from Electric Vehicle requirements for police, fire, and military vehicles, it is appropriate that the utility industry be afforded the same exemption for the response vehicles they rely on to protect and serve the public through restoration of electricity and stormwater services.

The maintenance and restoration of these systems requires the use of specialized Utility Service Vehicles (USV). Oftentimes, these vehicles are called upon during times of emergency, natural disasters, and extreme weather events. The distance crews are commonly required to travel to restore or stabilize services can be more than 100 miles in extreme temperatures.

Once the crews arrive at an area that requires repairs or restoration, the USV may remain on sight for many hours or even days while operating auxiliary hydraulic functions, such as a digger derrick (auger), hydrovac (water-vacuum), and personnel lift (bucket) operations.

In addition to these mechanical functions, consistent with state law, these vehicles serve as shelters from the elements. This use requires extended periods of time when engine idling is required to provide heating and cooling for crews. Presently, electrified USVs cannot adequately perform these functions or meet the basic needs of utility workers as they service and repair utility infrastructure.

On a regular basis utility providers share equipment resources through Mutual Aid and Assistance to neighboring communities in Washington and other states across the country experiencing service outages due to natural disasters and extreme weather events that interrupt utility services. The current ZEV capabilities are not adequate to support these operations that often require hundreds of miles of travel to reach neighboring communities in need of regional assistance outside the local area in need.

Please exempt Utility Service Vehicles from the zero emission vehicle requirements.