



PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF MASON COUNTY
N. 21971 Hwy. 101
Shelton, Washington 98584
MIKE SHEETZ, Commissioner
JACK JANDA, Commissioner
RON GOLD, Commissioner

August 11, 2026

Department of Ecology
Gopika Patwa
300 Desmond Dr. SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Gopika.patwa@ecy.wa.gov

RE: WSR-26-14-026 PROPOSED RULEMAKING FOR CHAPTER 173-423 WAC, CLEAN VEHICLES PROGRAM RULE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide formal comments regarding the proposed revisions to Chapter 173-423 WAC, as noticed in WSR-26-14-026.

Mason County PUD No. 1 is a water and electric service provider that serves rural Mason and south Jefferson Counties along the Hood Canal. We serve over 1,100 square miles and our crews work in extreme weather conditions to keep residents in safe, reliable power and water service throughout the year. We have grave concerns about the proposed Clean Vehicles Program and the impacts that EV mandates will have on our ability to respond to emergencies and the impact that recharging and downtime will have on our service restoration times, especially during extreme weather events where restoration can take several days under existing operational conditions.

As such, Mason PUD 1 strongly urges the Department of Ecology (ECY) to incorporate the flexibilities established by California's Assembly Bill 1594 (Garcia, 2023). This legislation specifically directs the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to accommodate public agency utilities by authorizing the replacement of "traditional utility-specialized vehicles" (TUSVs) that have reached the end of their useful life with internal combustion engine (ICE) models, regardless of model year. AB 1594 recognizes that utility vehicles are essential for responding to "major foreseeable events," including severe weather, wildfires, and natural disasters. To maintain federal identity under Section 177 of the Clean Air Act, Washington must adopt the same "relief valve" processes codified in California, including the specialized definitions and the expanded Daily Usage Exemption that allows for comprehensive data reporting rather than relying on minimal-use readings.

Despite the recent Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolutions (H.J.Res. 87, 88, and 89), which purported to overturn EPA waivers for California's emission standards, and the State of Washington's position on those resolutions, Washington remains legally bound to maintain standards identical to California's. If Washington fails to adopt the accommodations CARB has now integrated to comply with AB 1594, Washington's program will become more stringent than California's, creating a departure from identity that places the state's Clean Vehicle Program at significant risk of legal challenge. We urge ECY to use all means possible to provide legitimate legal pathways that mirror California's current regulatory structure for state and local government fleets.

Utility service providers must not have their choices constrained when acquiring the reliable equipment necessary for public safety. Highly specialized assets, such as bucket trucks and digger derricks, can cost upwards of \$1 million and require up to three years for procurement. Ensuring access to reliable, essential equipment is critical to keeping millions of Washingtonians in power and water service. Currently, the EV market is extremely volatile and major



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manufacturers have recently scaled back or discontinued electric truck and van models, while startups have faced bankruptcy.

Furthermore, currently available battery-electric configurations often fail to meet the rigorous demands of emergency restoration in remote areas. At a recent American Public Power Association conference, our General Manager attended a session on EV adoption for utilities, and the largely east coast panel of early EV adopters discussed how long their electric line trucks and bucket trucks were able to operate on a full charge. Their answer was **five hours**. And that was under normal service conditions- not during extreme heat or cold events and lengthy outage restorations where booms and outriggers are being operated the entire time.

Our power and water crews work 10 hour days on regular scheduled work weeks and can work as much as 18-24 shifts on outage response in extreme weather conditions. Our remote service territory already has no access to high-speed charging infrastructure and very limited access to Level 2 charging stations. If the power is out, there is no way for them to charge their trucks anyway when they're out in the field. This means that every 3-4 hours, they would have to pull off of the work site and travel up to 50 miles back to the PUD shop to sit and recharge their vehicles before they could go back out and continue their day's work or return to restoration efforts. For families who have been without power for most of the day, sometimes even up to a week, this additional delay in PUD restoration efforts will be unacceptable and in many cases life threatening. Our customer base has a disproportionate number of elderly and low-income households, many of whom rely on medical equipment at home such as C-PAP or oxygen machines and many of whom rely solely on electric heating and cannot afford backup generators.

The only other option for us is to simply not replace our fleet until we can make meaningful changes to these standards and the affordability and availability of complaint vehicles improves. Forcing utilities to rely on aging, less reliable equipment because they cannot register new, compliant ICE specialized vehicles creates an unacceptable risk to utility workers and the public.

It is for these life and safety reasons primarily, but also from a common sense and operational standpoint, that Mason PUD 1 strongly urges ECY to provide clear and legitimate legal pathways to accommodate utility service providers. This must include adopting the California TUSV definitions and the full suite of exemptions for emergency response tools. While Mason PUD 1 has been a leader in seeking grants to install Level 2 EV charging equipment on the Hood Canal and encouraging EV ownership in our rural county, we also must ensure that Washington's Clean Vehicle Program Rules do not come at the expense of operational readiness or the reliability of essential public services.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter. We look forward to working with your office to apply common sense remedies that align with Washington State's objectives but keep our public and employees safe.

Sincerely,

The Mason County PUD No. 1 Board of Commissioners


Ron Gold, President


Mike Sheetz, Vice President


Jack Janda, Secretary