Hawaiian Electric
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NEWS RELEASE

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Hawaiian Electric Companies to conduct drone surveys as part of overall wildfire mitigation planning

Flights scheduled in East O'ahu, West Maui to pinpoint vulnerable areas

HONOLULU, Nov. 5, 2019 – The Hawaiian Electric Companies will conduct drone surveys across their five-island territory to identify areas vulnerable to wildfire and determine the best course of action to protect the public, as well as electrical infrastructure.

Drone, or unmanned aircraft system, surveys will be conducted in November and December in East O'ahu, West Maui and Ma'alaea. Future surveys are being planned for Ka'ū on Hawai'i Island.

These aerial inspections are part of the companies' proactive assessment and management of vegetation near their electrical infrastructure, especially in drought-prone or dry brush areas.

Hawaiian Electric, Maui Electric and Hawai'i Electric Light earlier this year evaluated the wildfire mitigation plans filed by the major utilities in California and studied Hawai'i fire ignition maps to determine where the greatest risks are and to provide a basis for planning.

Unlike California, many utility lines in Hawai'i run through tropical forests and areas that typically receive abundant rainfall. That makes it easier to concentrate on mapping drought-prone areas where sparks could ignite dry grass and brush beneath power lines.

Other resilience initiatives launched by the companies to prevent wildfires include:

- Installing heavier, insulated conductors on Maui and O'ahu to stop lines from slapping and sparking in areas prone to high winds. The companies are identifying more areas where it makes sense to install these conductors.
- Installing smart switches and smart fuses to minimize sparks created when lines come into contact with each other, and with vegetation.
- Applying fire retardants on poles identified in fire hazard areas. Last month, Hawaiian Electric tested several different fire retardants on wooden poles in a controlled burn to determine which products will best protect the companies' infrastructure.
- Looking into using weather sensors, cameras and thermal imagers to give more precise locations on localized wind gusts, relative humidity and temperatures.

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