

Kirkwood working out its electrical issues

By Kathryn Reed

Ratepayers are not expected to see a spike in bills as Kirkwood continues to get its power from temporary rented generators.

Although Mountain Utilities, an arm of Mountain Springs Kirkwood, is suddenly paying for power in a different way because a New Year's Day fire destroyed the powerhouse, what's in place now is more efficient so the cost balances out.



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Insurance issues are still being worked out regarding the fire that knocked out power to the ski resort and all lodging facilities for a couple days.

“There is a high degree of confidence that a new plant can be operational by fall,” said David Likins, CEO for Mountain Springs Kirkwood. MSK also owns Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

Long before the fire, Mountain Utilities had been talking to Kirkwood Meadows Public Utility District about taking over the power operation.

“The terms of the final acquisition have not been resolved. It's difficult to put a dollar value on it until that

transaction is negotiated in final form," Likins said.

The plan is Mountain Utilities would then dissolve. The 10 employees are likely to work elsewhere for Mountain Springs Kirkwood.

The ski resort will still have to maintain transformers for the chairlifts just like homeowners are responsible for the interior wiring of their homes no matter the electrical supplier.

Before the fire, the diesel powerhouse was not going to be part of the sale.

Likins said the plan now is to have KMPUD work with Mountain Utilities on creating the new powerhouse, with the idea KMPUD will eventually own and operate it. Eventually, it will be the backup in case power lines go down.

The generators now in place will remain there until the powerhouse is erected. Likins anticipates the permitting process to go smoothly because the land is being used for the same thing.

In March, the draft environment impact report and statement should be released by the U.S. Forest Service and Kirkwood Meadows Public Utility District for the potential authorization of a 50-year special use permit for the construction, use and maintenance of a KMPUD power line connecting the electrical grid near Salt Springs with Kirkwood Meadows.

The line would connect with an existing Pacific Gas & Electric line. The new line would likely be on Eldorado National Forest land.

The final EIR/EIS could be released in October.

KMPUD now provides water and sewer services to the area as well as power to its plant, office building and employee

housing off Loop Road in the Kirkwood valley.