

Date: 4/3/2026

To: San Miguel County Commissioners

Re: Support for Proposed Live Fire Training Facility – Placerville, CO

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of Black Hills Energy, I am writing to express our strong support for the development of a live fire training facility in Placerville, Colorado. This proposed facility represents a critical investment in regional emergency preparedness, responder safety, and interagency collaboration.

In 2025, Black Hills Energy had the opportunity to partner with the Telluride area local fire departments during live fire training exercises. These trainings proved invaluable in strengthening coordination between emergency responders and private sector partners. They enhanced situational awareness, communication, tactical decision-making, and overall operational safety when responding to incidents involving energy infrastructure and other high-risk environments.

Live fire training facilities provide a realistic and controlled environment that cannot be replicated through classroom instruction alone. The ability for firefighters and emergency responders to train under real-world fire conditions significantly improves skill retention, confidence, and performance during actual emergencies. From an industry perspective, this level of preparedness directly contributes to safer outcomes for responders, the public, and critical infrastructure.

We are particularly encouraged by the collaborative vision for this facility, which would serve not only one department but also neighboring agencies including Norwood, Rico, Naturita, Ridgway, Montrose, Ouray, as well as federal partners such as the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. A regional training center of this nature fosters consistency in tactics, improves mutual aid effectiveness, and strengthens working relationships across jurisdictions.

Black Hills Energy believes that continued investment in emergency services training is essential to the safety and resilience of our communities. The proposed live fire training facility aligns with these priorities and would be a lasting asset to San Miguel County and the surrounding region.

We respectfully encourage the County Commissioners to support this project and recognize the long-term benefits it will provide to public safety agencies and community partners alike.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brien Gardner

BRIEN GARDNER

Supervisor Operations-Blackhills Energy

Telluride/Ridgway/Naturita/Pagosa Springs

Mobile: 970-417-9972 Email: brien.gardner@blackhillsenergy.com