

Northwest Public Power Association **BULLETIN**

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The Walla Walla Way

How Columbia REA has successfully handled the wine and tourism explosion within its service area





On the cover: Les Collines, one of Amavi Cellars three estate vineyards, covers 240 acres in the Walla Walla Valley Appellation. Award-winning Amavi Cellars is just one of 28 wineries that are now served by Columbia REA. Photo provided by Amavi Cellars.

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The *Bulletin* is a publication of Northwest Public Power Association, a regional organization of diverse utilities. The membership is made up of utility districts, electric cooperatives, municipalities, and crown corporations in Alaska, British Columbia, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. We are also a trade association for nearly 300 companies, individuals, and organizations affiliated with the electric power industry.

Opinions expressed in single articles are not necessarily policies of the Association. For permission to reprint articles, write or call the associate editor.

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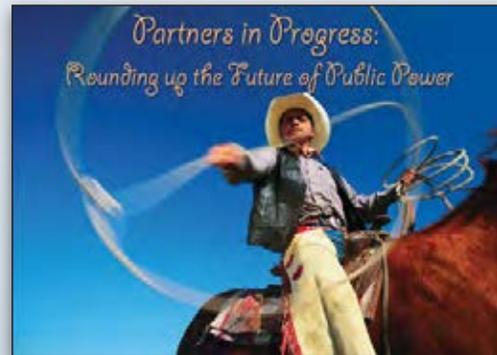


Annual Meeting is approaching fast — are you registered?

The 74th Annual Conference and Membership Meeting will be held next month in Billings, Mont., May 18-22. If you have not yet registered for it, here are some important dates to keep in mind:

- April 23 is the last day to receive the early-bird rate on the conference registration
- May 1 is the last day to register for the pre-conference golf tournament on May 18 at Lake Hills Golf Club; the tournament is co-sponsored by NWPPA and EES Consulting
- May 3 is the last day to secure NWPPA room rates at the Holiday Inn Grand Montana

Please join us in Montana for this year's Annual Conference and Membership Meeting, "Partners in Progress: Rounding up the Future of Public Power." NWPPA has lined up an impressive list of presenters from both outside and inside the industry to address current challenges such as recog-



nizing the trends in the utility industry, the elements of change impacting the industry, and the possible change in the public power model.

To register, get up-to-date information, or download a PDF of the conference brochure, visit www.nwppa.org. We hope to see you there! **NWPPA**

NWPPA offers two new crisis communication courses

At some point throughout its history, every utility will face a crisis of some sort, whether it be an act of nature (an ice storm, flooding, or blizzard), a man-made issue (leadership change, financial difficulty, or a rate increase), or a fatal accident. And how the communications department and frontline personnel respond to the issue is critical to the integrity and success of the utility. A well-communicated incident can positively impact customers' trust in the utility as well as its leadership.

To help our members face these situations, NWPPA has designed two new crisis communications classes: *Communicating in Crisis Situations* and *Crisis Media Training*. Both day-long classes will be held in Vancouver, Wash., June 2 and June 3 respectively, and will be taught by long-time NWPPA instructor Debra Ballard from Continuum + Education.

Communicating in Crisis Situations will cover the importance of all employees speaking with one voice; the ramifica-



tions that individual actions can have on a utility; the various crises that a utility can face; how to respond in a measured professional manner; and the importance of choice of words and the tone of voice.

Crisis Media Training will focus on the fact that if a utility does not take control and position itself, particularly in the media, then it will be positioned and tried in the court of public opinion by others. In this course, attendees will learn the step-by-step process of developing and/or evaluating a utility crisis communication plan; and discuss the nuances of holding successful press conferences, issuing statements, and dealing with reporters and other media representatives. To practice these communication tools, attendees will then participate in a mock press conference in which the other attendees play the part of the media in a variety of crises that utilities have recently faced.

To register for the classes, visit www.nwppa.org. For questions about either, contact Arnie Winkler at (360) 816-1445. **NWPPA**

2014 Call for Entries now available

Utility marketing and communications employees, check your inboxes! NWPPA emailed the 2014 Call for Entries for NWPPA's 21st annual Excellence in Communication Awards earlier this month; however, if you did not receive one, you may download the complete brochure at www.nwppa.org.

The brochure contains all of the details about this year's competition, including categories (a social media category has been added for 2014!), entry fees, and how to submit your entries. All entries and fees must be postmarked by Friday, June 27. Contact Brenda Dunn at brenda@nwppa.org if you have any questions about the contest.

As in years past, the winning entries and utilities will be honored at Tuesday's fun-filled evening reception at the annual Northwest Communications & Energy Innovations Conference on September 16 at the Renaissance Seattle Hotel in Downtown Seattle, Wash. The conference itself will run from September 14-17, 2014, at the Renaissance. Look for more information about the conference in upcoming *Bulletins*. **NWPPA**



2014 GM, director survey results online in May

On April 15, NWPPA will close the 2014 *General Manager's Compensation Survey* and the 2014 *Director, Commissioner & Other Elected Officials Survey*. To complete either survey before then, go to www.nwppa.org, click on the Communications tab, and choose Surveys.

Both surveys will be closed on April 15 and reports will be generated with the survey results. Reports for both surveys will be available by May 30, 2014, from our website. All survey information is kept confidential and may only be accessed by NWPPA utility member general managers and HR senior management.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in this very important survey process!

If you are having trouble accessing the surveys or the results, please contact Brenda Dunn at brenda@nwppa.org or (360) 816-1453. **NWPPA**



CleanHydro highlights hydropower, river values

This spring, Pacific Northwest residents will see something on TV that has been a part of the Northwest way of life for over 75 years, yet is often overlooked: how hydropower dams and the incredible power of the Northwest's Columbia and Snake Rivers benefit our daily lives. CleanHydro is a public education effort coordinated by Northwest RiverPartners, an alliance of utilities, ports, farming organizations, and businesses. The campaign aims to reach over seven million people and features TV ads that will run in western Washington and Oregon; a significant portion of the eastern parts of both states; and in Missoula, Mont.

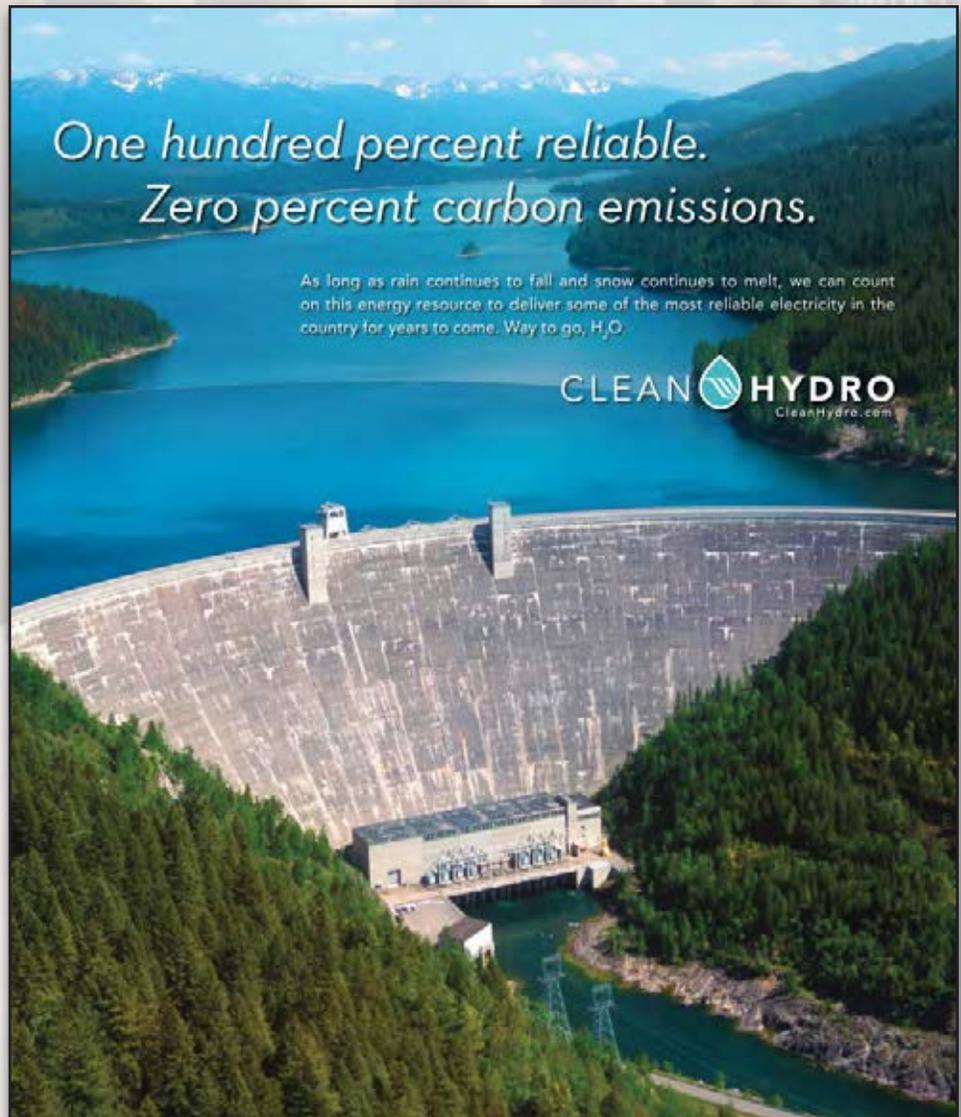
"CleanHydro is about re-joining the energy conversation and bringing hydropower back into the mainstream dialogue. It's about reminding people of the tremendous energy, economic, and environmental benefits these resources bring to their everyday lives," said Roman Gillian, Consumers Power CEO and campaign co-chair.

With new residents coming to the Northwest and a younger generation receiving little to no education on the benefits of hydropower, there has been waning appreciation for this great resource. In addition, new renewables such as wind and solar have played prominently in the media; and as a result, hydropower has been disregarded, giving rise to a perception that these newer technologies are the only renewables out there. This is why we need to continue to actively tell the incredible story of our dams, hydropower, and the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Telling that comprehensive story will help people appreciate them and understand why they make the Northwest the envy of the rest of the country.

Last year, the campaign increased support for hydro across the board. In opinion polling done following the campaign, 77 percent of Northwest residents identified hydropower as a clean, renewable source of energy, up from 72 percent. Public support for

Congress and state legislators to identify hydro as a renewable resource in law increased by six percent. And the campaign also increased resident's support for having more hydro in their energy resource mix in the future.

Take a moment to visit CleanHydro.com, which features the ads and additional information about the Northwest's hydropower and river system, and you, too, will be singing the praises of hydropower. As this year's ad says: Way to go, H₂O! **NWPPA**



*One hundred percent reliable.
Zero percent carbon emissions.*

As long as rain continues to fall and snow continues to melt, we can count on this energy resource to deliver some of the most reliable electricity in the country for years to come. Way to go, H₂O.

CLEAN HYDRO
CleanHydro.com

Getting to know the NWPPA Board

- **Name:** Dick Helgeson
- **Utility:** EWEB (Eugene, Ore.)
- **Position:** Commissioner
- **Education:** Studied computer science and economics at the University of Oregon
- **Years in utility industry:** Worked at EWEB for 31 years before retiring in 2009. Seated on the EWEB Commission in 2012.
- **Years on NWPPA Board:** Has been serving in the vacated seat of John Brown since 2013.
- **What are the current challenges at your utility?** I believe the biggest challenge right now is dealing with the loss of revenues from when the wholesale markets went down; how do we balance that while not continuing double-digit rate increases to make up for the loss in revenue? We have had to manage the financial situation and there have been many short-term financial challenges due to the recession. However, despite the challenges and culture shift, EWEB continues to move forward and has not lost sight of its values and long-term objectives.
- **What do you see as the current challenges in the industry?** The challenge here in the Northwest is to reinterpret the value and tenets of public power going forward so we can stay true to our ideals and continue to be responsible. We still have the same intrinsic values that we always have had, but we need to change with the times and make the message more contemporary so that it resonates with the current members and future customers.
- **How does NWPPA help your utility and the industry with these challenges?** First, the association is a common forum for dialogue between policymakers and managers; it enables peers with a common agenda to learn new things from one another. Second, NWPPA has a positive political influence with a legislative agenda that keeps us focused on the common concerns. The association has an effective presence in D.C. with a strong set of relationships to draw upon. Finally, it provides very strong education programs, which are especially important now with a younger generation coming on board to the industry.
- **Any hobbies outside of the public power world?** Volunteering with organizations and other nonprofit boards, such as Bring Recycling; enjoying carpentry and collectibles; working in the yard when the weather is nice; traveling; and spending time with family. NWPPA



A look back at public power

50 years ago — 1964

Lewis County PUD received Washington state's safety record award for 18 months, 179,279 man-hours worked without a lost-time accident ... Kodiak Electric Association applied for a preliminary permit to study a proposed 22,500-kilowatt hydroelectric power project on Kodiak Island (Alaska) ... Franklin County PUD announced that they had provided 10 men to help restore service on lines of Big Bend Electric Cooperative a few months earlier; the lines had been damaged by ice (Wash.) ... Portland General Electric announced plans to spend \$20 million over the next decade to install underground service in Southwest Portland (Ore.).

25 years ago — 1989

The Bonneville Power Administration chose Flathead Electric Cooperative for a pilot project to show the value of building Super Good Cents homes (Mont.) ... The Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association met with Steve Wright, BPA's California marketing representative, in an effort to cement ties with California delegates ... Matanuska Electric Association's chapter of the National Rural Electric Womens Association received a PEARL Award for promoting excellence in American rural life (Alaska) ... Surprise Valley Electrification Corp. was a step closer to serving the city of Alturas after a district court set the price of Pacific Power & Light's facilities in Alturas at \$6 million (Calif.).

5 years ago — 2009

Kootenai Electric Cooperative announced the addition of Douglas Elliott to the staff as the new general manager (Idaho) ... The Eugene Water & Electric Board started Community Care, a \$4.4 million effort to provide assistance to thousands of customers struggling during the current economic downturn (Ore.) ... Turlock Irrigation District launched a conservation program that would reach 1,632 sixth-grade students in its service area by delivering Energy Wise Kits to 41 classrooms (Calif.) ... The City of Seward hired John Foutz as its new utility manager (Alaska) ... OPALCO upgraded its Olga Substation with a new 12-ton transformer (Wash.). NWPPA



Connect • Learn • Serve

May and June 2014

Please register 30 days in advance to receive the Early Bird discount. See www.nwppa.org for more information.

NORTHWEST WAGE & HOUR MEETING

Who Should Attend: Members of the Northwest Wage and Hour group: general managers, labor relations employees, and human resource professionals.

Overview: Northwest Wage and Hour meetings are opportunities for members of the group to discuss issues relevant to labor relations within public utilities. The meeting includes Steering Committee updates and roundtable discussions on contract negotiations (excluding rates and percentages), grievances, arbitrations, and other current topics.

MAY 2, 2014 — SPOKANE, WASH.

LINEMAN SKILLS SERIES — REGISTER FOR ALL 3 DAYS!

Who Should Attend: Linemen, line crew foremen, substation personnel, electrical engineers, and safety managers.

Overview: Day 1 — *AC Transformers, Advanced Theory, and Practical Application*; Day 2 — *Regulators and Capacitors: Power Quality for Linemen*; and Day 3 — *Personal Protective Grounding*. Save \$170 if you register for the entire three-day Lineman Skills Series instead of registering for each course individually!

MAY 6-8, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

LINEMAN SKILLS SERIES: DAY 1 — AC TRANSFORMERS, ADVANCED THEORY, AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Who Should Attend: Journeyman linemen, foremen/supervisors, engineers, and those involved in planning, scheduling, and engineering operations for a utility.

Overview: This advanced class provides attendees with a journeyman lineman's view of AC transformers. The curriculum includes a combination of electrical theory and hands-on practice. The overall program is to teach students how transformers are used to manage and control the flow of alternating current in electrical distribution systems.

MAY 6, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

NUTS AND BOLTS OF WORK ORDERS

Who Should Attend: Employees involved in any aspect of preparing and/or processing work orders for their electric utility, or employees outside the accounting area who want a better understanding of the work order process.

Overview: This class covers everything you ever wanted to know about work orders and provides current information about specific documentation demands and forms necessary to meet accounting requirements. You will not only analyze the why of work order systems, but you will also review the how to of the process.

MAY 6-7, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

NEW! PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR UTILITY PERSONNEL

Who Should Attend: Anyone involved in projects — project managers, project team members, planners, or senior managers.

Overview: This two-day course is intended for both novice and experienced project managers and their supporters. The course provides an introduction to the primary processes and knowledge areas of applied project management, including initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing projects.

MAY 6-7, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

LINEMAN SKILLS SERIES: DAY 2 — REGULATORS AND CAPACITORS: POWER QUALITY FOR LINEMEN

Who Should Attend: Electrical linemen, line crew foremen, substation personnel, and electrical engineers.

Overview: This course is designed to help the student better understand the function, purpose, and application of regulators and capacitors. Students will observe the inner workings of a step voltage regulator and applied electrical theory. Students will also learn to work safely with various capacitors in different configurations and connections, while using hands-on demonstrations.

MAY 7, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

NEW! CHALLENGING FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Who Should Attend: Anyone who has completed at least two modules of the NWPPA Utility Accounting Certificate Program, or anyone with significant utility accounting/finance experience.

Overview: This is a computer-intensive class that will teach you how key ratios are developed, techniques for evaluating various financial reports, the components of cash flow, how to review your system's cash flow, and the determination of optimum equity.

MAY 7-8, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

LINEMAN SKILLS SERIES: DAY 3 — PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GROUNDING

Who Should Attend: All electrical workers involved in personal protective grounding.

Overview: This course discusses protective grounding theory, emphasizing safety and the range of acceptable currents. It also covers visual inspection of grounding systems (mats, connectors, risers, and straps); special considerations and hazards (IEEE Standard 80); and personal protective grounds, including sizing, testing, inspection, maintenance, and use.

MAY 8, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

QUALIFIED WORKER TRAINING

Who Should Attend: Engineers, technicians, meter readers, and other operations personnel who are required by OSHA 1910.269 to have this training.

Overview: The course covers federal regulations related to entering a secured area; minimum approach distances or clearances; personal protective equipment; job briefings; substation entrance procedures; and opening padmount transformers, switchgear, and metering compartments. Employees typically open and/or view electrical equipment in secured areas to take information off of nameplates, readings from meters or gauges, etc.

MAY 8, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

IT SECTION MEETING FEATURING BPA CUSTOMER PORTAL PRESENTATION

Who Should Attend: Managers and staff who are involved in the information technology aspects of their organizations.

Overview: Join your colleagues from throughout the region for this convenient, one-day meeting that features a presentation on a current IT topic followed by open discussions with your colleagues. To make this informative meeting convenient for you, each section meeting starts late, ends early, and is close to an airport.

MAY 13, 2014 — PORTLAND, ORE.

Continued on page 8

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

NEW! RCRA TRAINING FOR UTILITY PERSONNEL

Who Should Attend: All employees with environmental responsibilities at utilities and those companies that work with utilities.

Overview: Designed for electric utilities and part of NWPPA's Environmental Series, this course provides an overview of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) that was passed by the U.S. Congress on October 21, 1976. The law's focus is to regulate hazardous waste and non-hazardous solid waste; the law introduced a "cradle-to-grave" philosophy for the management of hazardous waste.

MAY 13, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

HAZWOPER 8-HOUR FIRST RESPONDER AWARENESS/RE-CERTIFICATION TRAINING FOR UTILITY PERSONNEL

Who Should Attend: First responders who are likely to witness, discover, or respond to a hazardous substance release and need to initiate an emergency response sequence by notifying the proper people.

Overview: Part of NWPPA's Environmental Series and designed for the needs of electric utilities, this course will refresh your knowledge and understanding of the requirements for hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER), as required by 29 CFR 1910.120. This course also helps to satisfy the annual HAZWOPER training required for re-certification. This course trains operations-level responders to take defensive actions to a hazardous materials spill.

MAY 14, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

ONLINE — HELPING CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND USAGE AND CONSERVATION MEASURES

Who Should Attend: Customer service personnel and anyone who needs to interact with customers about energy usage.

Overview: Many consumers are remarkably uninformed or misinformed about how to understand and control their energy use, how the utility designs its rates, and what to do to make their homes more energy efficient. Employees who are responsible for helping consumers understand their bills, the utility's rates, and how to be more energy efficient will gain knowledge and expertise so that they can communicate with customers in a more professional and credible manner.

MAY 14, 2014 — ONLINE PRESENTATION

FRONT LINE LEADERSHIP #2: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Who Should Attend: Front line supervisors and managers, and front line employees.

Overview: This is the second in a series of four sessions leading to a Certificate in Front Line Leadership from NWPPA. The front line leader's role in facilitating performance will be described, along with ways of dealing with challenges such as denial and reluctance to accept accountability.

MAY 14-15, 2014 — SEATTLE, WASH.

NWPPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Who Should Attend: Utility managers; assistant managers; senior staff; power supply managers; utility board and council members; associate members; and trade association heads.

Overview: Much of this year's agenda is set on key questions that will be discussed by experts and panels. Topics will include changes to the public power business model; how wind, solar, and the electric car industry are changing the business model; distributive generation — legal and authority pressures; finding your next executive — roles, responsibilities, and details of an effective plan; and why is the smart grid smart? For more information, see page 3.

MAY 18-22, 2014 — BILLINGS, MONT.

PRE-CONFERENCE COURSE: INTERPLAY — A PUBLIC POWER BUSINESS SIMULATION

Who Should Attend: Policy makers, general managers, CEOs, senior staff members, and members of utility advisory committees.

Overview: Interplay is a team-based business simulation about public power that challenges teams of 4-5 participants to create value for customers/members by successfully managing an enterprise. During the simulation, team results are tracked, compared, and reviewed. At the end of the simulation, participants are asked to consider their learning and insight.

MAY 19, 2014 — BILLINGS, MONT.

PRE-CONFERENCE COURSE: INTRODUCTION TO ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Who Should Attend: Policy makers, general managers, clerks to the board, executive secretaries, and administrative assistants.

Overview: *Robert's Rules of Order* can be baffling and intimidating. People who know how to use it sometimes seem to employ the system as a weapon, not a tool to make meetings better; but it doesn't have to be that way. In this highly interactive and entertaining day-long class, attendees will learn essential principles and practice the tools and techniques to use *Robert's Rules* well in order to run smooth, efficient, and fair meetings.

MAY 19, 2014 — BILLINGS, MONT.

NEW! COMMUNICATING IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

Who Should Attend: Communications and marketing professionals.

Overview: Public utilities depend on their front-line personnel (such as customer service representatives, receptionists/cashiers, dispatchers, and call center employees) to represent them in a professional, efficient manner. These employees are the face and voice of the organization and are often responsible for creating the customers'/members' opinions of their utility. This is even more true when there is a crisis situation, regardless of whether the crisis is due to an act of nature, man-made crisis (such as leadership change, financial difficulty, or rate increases), or an accident. For more information, see page 3.

JUNE 2, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

DISTRIBUTION ENGINEERING PLANNING & ANALYSIS

Who Should Attend: Engineers and senior technical personnel involved in system design, planning, modeling, and analysis.

Overview: This four-day course is one of three events in the Distribution Engineering series designed to teach critical concepts and skills in distribution engineering. The other two sessions in the series are *Overcurrent Protection* (a two-day class) and *Overvoltage Protection* (a 90-minute webinar). Combined with a short project, those who complete all three courses receive a certificate from Hi-Line Engineering for this training series. This first session in the series is a practical and skills-focused course covering engineering planning from analyzing a computer model of a distribution system to documenting a planning study. Bring your engineering questions from your utility to this course for discussion and solutions!

JUNE 2-6, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.



NEW! CRISIS MEDIA TRAINING

Who Should Attend: Marketing, member services, community relations, and government affairs employees who deal directly with crisis management communications.

Overview: How a utility responds to a crisis is dependent on two things: 1) how quickly the utility physically responds to the customers' needs, and 2) how prepared the utility is when responding to media and customer questions concerning the crisis regardless of its type. The utility can either position itself (particularly in the media) or it can be positioned and tried in the court of public opinion by others. For more information, see page 3.

JUNE 3, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

OPERATIONS MANAGER & LINE SUPERINTENDENT BOOTCAMP 2013/2014 SECOND SERIES — SESSION #4

Who Should Attend: Newly appointed operations managers, line superintendents, or those who have leadership potential.

Overview: This two-day course will provide you with the tools and knowledge that will add to your current operational skills and abilities to succeed as you take on additional responsibilities. Day 1, *How Outside Plant Employees Can Build Stronger Customer Relations*, is designed for employees who work in the field and covers the basic principles of good customer service. On Day 2, *Building Strategic Internal Partnerships*, participants will learn about the meaningful benefits of developing and fostering internal partnerships as a foundation for mutual success.

JUNE 4-5, 2014 — PORTLAND, ORE.

PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP SESSION #5: LEAD YOUR ORGANIZATION, SUSTAIN EXCELLENCE, AND MANAGE CHANGE

Who Should Attend: Directors, managers, graduates of the Frontline Leadership Series, and newly appointed senior leaders.

Overview: Pathways to Leadership Session 5 will focus on sustaining a culture of excellence within your team and organization. You will learn how to assess your culture, lead change, and renew the energy of your team toward desired values, goals, and initiatives. In this session you will learn and apply key tools for maximizing and sustaining high performance within your team. In doing so, you will make clear ties to the success of your organization as well.

JUNE 4-5, 2014 — STEVENSON, WASH.

ELECTRIC UTILITY SYSTEM OPERATIONS

Who Should Attend: Any industry employee whose job performance will benefit from a basic understanding of the operations side of the utility business, including engineering; operations; safety; purchasing; information technology; regulatory and rates; customer service; public relations; legal; and accounting employees.

Overview: This popular two-day course presents a clear understanding of the technical heartbeat of the utility by providing employees with a comprehensive understanding of electric utility system operations, including generation (fossil fuel, hydro, and nuclear generation), transmission, and distribution (down to 120V/240V residential connections).

JUNE 9-10, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

STAKING TECHNICIAN PROGRAM — UNDERGROUND LINE DESIGN AND SUBDIVISION LAYOUT

Who Should Attend: Staking engineers.

Overview: This two-and-a-half-day course is part of the Comprehensive Staking Technician Program. It is structured to teach the skills necessary to design and lay out URD residential subdivisions. Attendees will learn the proper application of underground components into a complete system. The components of primary cables are discussed in conjunction with selecting the proper secondary cable size and length. Emphasis is placed on the

construction and operations of the system, including proper grounding of cables and apparatus.

JUNE 9-11, 2014 — SPOKANE, WASH.

ONLINE — COMMUNICATING THROUGH BODY LANGUAGE

Who Should Attend: Anyone with an interest in customer/member service skills or interoffice relationships.

Overview: Research tells us that at least 55 percent of our communication message comes from our body language! This is a powerful number as we think about our many communications with our customers. In this webinar, you will learn what body language behaviors attract and/or detract customers. You will have a chance to see scenarios that showcase both good and bad body language elements and identify which ones you have showcased in the past.

JUNE 11, 2014 — ONLINE PRESENTATION

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Who Should Attend: Customer service professionals, particularly those interested in communication and sales skills.

Overview: Now more than ever, customers are asking you to help them understand their energy usage; how to conserve and save on their bills; and which of your programs will suit them best. How will you address their needs? Attend this class and learn techniques for helping customers make choices that are right for them as well as insights on how to diffuse potentially tough situations.

JUNE 11-12, 2014 — BOISE, IDAHO

ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

Who Should Attend: Engineers, line workers, substation workers, apprentices, and support staff that have direct responsibility for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the utility's distribution system.

Overview: This popular two-day course provides in-depth coverage of an electric utility's distribution system, from the distribution substation to a customer's outlet. Topics covered include substation transformers and testing; step and touch potential; various systems which customers may request, such as single-phase and three-phase power; details of overhead and underground electrical systems; reliability; transformer and capacitor details; and substation communications.

JUNE 11-12, 2014 — VANCOUVER, WASH.

STAKING TECHNICIAN PROGRAM — PROTECTION/BASIC SECTIONALIZING DESIGN

Who Should Attend: Staking technicians.

Overview: This course is part of the Comprehensive Staking Technician Program. It is designed to give students a basic understanding of the devices and techniques used to protect distribution lines and customers from damage or injury due to over current/over voltage. The following topics will be covered: fault current, including the basic application of devices to interrupt the maximum available fault current produced by short circuits; voltage surges caused by lightning and the use of lightning arresters to shunt the over-voltage to ground; and basic theory of voltage regulators and capacitors with a focus on correct placement and application of the devices on the circuit when a line is being staked.

JUNE 11-12, 2014 — SPOKANE, WASH.

STAKING TECHNICIAN PROGRAM — LINE INSPECTION

Who Should Attend: Staking technicians.

Overview: This course is part of the Comprehensive Staking Technician Program. The *National Electrical Safety Code* requires that a utility inspect its facilities periodically to ensure that they are safe and adequate to distribute electricity.

JUNE 12-13, 2014 — SPOKANE, WASH.

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TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

FRONT LINE LEADERSHIP SESSION #4: HR BASICS; BUILDING A MORE EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE

Who Should Attend: Front line supervisors and managers, and those front line employees who will be transitioning to a supervisor or manager role in the near future.

Overview: This course is for personnel who wish to obtain an overview and basic working knowledge of employment and labor laws that affect their business. On day one, attendees will cover basic federal laws, issues which commonly arise under these laws, and the significant areas giving rise to litigation in the employment process: hiring, evaluations, discipline, harassment, accommodation, attendance, and discharge. The purpose of day two, *Building a More Effective Workplace*, is to provide participants with a clear understanding of the importance of employee evaluations and the process to follow in preparing for and conducting appraisals.

JUNE 18-19, 2014 — RICHLAND, WASH.

KEY TOPICS IN UTILITY ACCOUNTING

Who Should Attend: Employees who are new to utility accounting; employees in the industry who need to understand the special requirements of utility accounting; and employees who would like a more in-depth understanding of utility accounting systems.

Overview: The course provides an introduction to many of the topics that are covered throughout the NWPPA Utility Accounting Certificate Program. We'll begin with an overview of electric utility operations and terminology before moving on to the following topics: prescribed uniform system of accounts (for example, FERC or RUS); cash accounting versus accrual accounting; work order systems; the general ledger and subsidiary ledgers; and the four account-

ing cycles — revenue, collections, disbursements, and payroll.
JUNE 24-25, 2014 — SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP SESSION #2: SITUATIONAL TEAM LEADERSHIP

Who Should Attend: Directors, managers, graduates of the Frontline Leadership series, and newly appointed senior leaders.
Overview: This two-day course can teach you the skills to build trust, encourage collaboration, enhance problem solving, and help move your team(s) through the different stages of team development. It is a core framework of the following five steps: perform model, team charter, team development, situational leadership II, and tools for team leadership.

JUNE 24-25, 2014 — BEND, ORE.

UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTIAL ENERGY USAGE

Who Should Attend: Employees within energy services, member/customer service, conservation, and marketing. Also, employees who work with customers to explain energy use and answer customer questions about their energy consumption.

Overview: This two-day class is offered as part of the NWPPA Customer Service Certificate program, but is open to anyone interested in the topic. This course will provide a comprehensive understanding of how energy is used in a home and explain what to look for when determining the causes of higher-than-expected energy use by a customer (including weather, seasonal appliance usage, home occupancy, and instant-on appliance usage).

JUNE 25-26, 2014 — SACRAMENTO, CALIF. NWPPA

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by Erica Erland

Underground outage quick fix reduces restore time



New Construction Superintendent Brian Roden stands next to Clark Public Utilities' high-voltage extension cord that is helping them keep the power on for customers while utility crews repair underground power lines. Photos by Randy Kepple.

Sometimes it just takes a team willing to try something new to discover an efficient solution to an ongoing problem. And that's what the Operations team at Clark Public Utilities is doing.

When faced with an increasing number of underground outages caused by failing cable direct buried in residential neighborhoods, employees got creative and developed a trailer carrying what they've coined the "high-voltage extension cord."

While underground power lines are resistant to weather-related outages, large areas of vintage underground cable are failing in residential parts of our service territory and causing outages that are both difficult to locate and slow to repair. It seems these cables, installed decades ago, have an uncanny ability to develop problems directly under sidewalks, driveways, ornate landscaping, or even buildings. Rarely is the problem in an easily accessible area under an

open expanse of undeveloped dirt. And often just finding the break is tricky, even with sophisticated locating equipment.

"There are few things worse than tracking down an underground outage and figuring it's right below a new outdoor patio structure with custom-stamped concrete or beautiful trees that've been there forever," said New Construction Superintendent Brian Roden. "We do everything we can to disturb property as little as possible, but that can make an underground repair job take even longer."

That's where the high-voltage extension cord comes into play. After a wave of these frustrating underground failures, the Operations group began to look at what other utilities were doing to restore folks faster. Some were using reels of underground wire to fashion crude versions of jumper cables around a failed section of underground wire.

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The cable is transported on a light-weight trailer and is rated at 15,000 volts to withstand rough above-ground use, while limiting risk to the public while energized.

While the execution was a bit inelegant, it wasn't a bad idea. So the team set out to fashion a better, safer option based on the concept.

"A lot of times, the distance between two transformers isn't very far in these neighborhoods so it wouldn't take much to get a line strung around the bad buried cable," said Director of Operations Andy Huck. "We knew if we could just get the lights back on while we figured out how to fix the problem, it would take the pressure off and we could move even more deliberately in these residential areas."

After exploring several alternatives, the team discovered a very flexible yet hearty type of high-voltage cable that was first designed to provide power to excavating equipment in open pit mines. The cable has a very tough exterior and is rated at 15,000 volts to withstand rough above-ground use, while limiting risk to the public while energized.

The Fleet team then created a trailer to transport the heavy-duty extension cord. The custom-made trailer is light and portable enough to move on site and set up easily. It's designed to hold a reel of this heavily insulated high-voltage cable and can be positioned near the outage to move power between working stretches of the system during repair.

Often, the line is run across a street, covered with a thick, high-traffic cord cover and marked with orange cones. Once in place, customers who would normally be out of power until the underground issue is resolved have lights back on and can go about their normal routine, even if that's just keeping the home warm while they sleep.

"At first, some line crews were skeptical of the new underground outage secret weapon," Huck said. "But after using the above-ground cable to restore customers quickly during underground failures and keep their power on while

permanent repairs were made, it became clear that the 'extension cord' was a win-win for everyone."

Over the last year it has proven clear that the temporary above-ground high-voltage extension cord is a success. Reliability improves, customers are happy, and the crews are able to locate and repair the underground cables safely knowing that the customers affected aren't waiting in the dark.

Sometimes, the extra time even means we can leave that elaborate, expensive poured patio in place and find a work around — and that makes a happy customer. **NWPPA**

Erica Erland is the corporate communications manager at Clark Public Utilities in Vancouver, Wash. She can be contacted at either eerland@clarkpud.com or (360) 992-3238.

Stopping outages before they occur

While the high-voltage extension cord has helped ease the impact of underground outages, the utility has also taken huge strides in preventing outages in these same neighborhoods. What used to be a seasonal cable-curing project, treating a small area every summer, has now become a year-round investment. Now in its second year, the cable treatment program has a dedicated line crew to inject underground cables in these at-risk areas with a silicon compound that can extend the life of the cable for decades.

The number of outages in areas where the cable has been treated has dropped dramatically and increased overall reliability measures in these neighborhoods.

"We've been trimming trees year round for more than a decade, while many utilities only manage vegetation seasonally or when an outage occurs," said Huck. "It's that same model that led us to build ongoing underground cable treatment into our annual budget. Now we're continually increasing reliability of both overhead and underground lines, and our customers appreciate the proactive approach."

The core technology of an electrical system hasn't changed much over the years; but using some of the newer support technologies available, coupled with some creative adaptation, can go a long way to keeping the lights on longer and with fewer interruptions over time. **NWPPA**

by Amber Nyquist

Debunking the death spiral

The “death spiral” discussion from the 1980s has been resurrected amid changes in the Pacific Northwest electric utility industry. The death spiral theory states that when increasing electricity costs are passed to consumers through higher rates, consumers react by reducing their consumption. Lower consumption then results in utilities raising electric rates even more to recover their fixed costs and further triggering reductions in consumption. Thus the death spiral would be the end of a healthy utility environment.

Experts in the early 80s theorized that the death spiral would be caused by the need for expensive power plants. For example, the Washington Public Power System Supply made large investments in power generation; however, the forecast for regional load growth never materialized, forcing utilities to raise rates. Today’s modern death spiral is believed to be caused by decreases in average use due to investment in energy efficiency and distributed generation. However, investigating average residential use over the past 12 years — and attendant retail rates — suggests that the so-called death spiral is better characterized as momentary dizziness.

Trends: what’s up with average use

It is true that average residential use is on the decline nationally. Figure 1 illustrates residential weather normalized average use for four Northwest states over the period 2001-2012. Average use is decreasing in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho while average use is increasing in Montana.

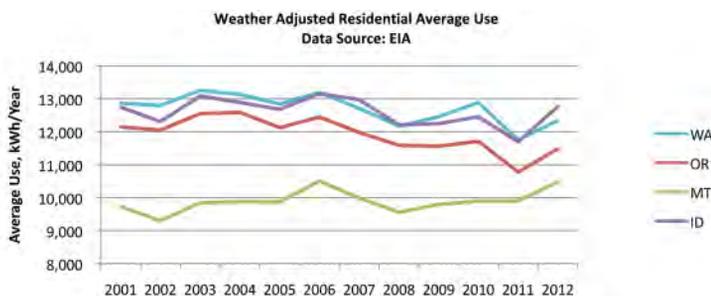


Figure 1

The three states with declines in average use have also made larger investments in energy-efficiency programs. Over the four-year period from 2009 through 2012, utilities in Washington spent on average 5.4 percent of their total revenue on energy-efficiency programs. Over the same four-year period, utilities in Oregon, Idaho, and Montana spent 3.4 percent, 2.4 percent, and 1.4 percent of their total revenues on energy-efficiency programs, respectively.

Seven not-so-deadly sins

Reductions in average residential use in the past 12 years are due to several factors:

1. **Homes have higher efficiency levels.** New homes are held to higher weatherization standards and older homes are more efficient on average thanks to large tax credits for weatherization upgrades.
2. **Increased energy efficiency investment.** Increased spending and state mandates have made energy efficiency investment available to more people.
3. **Technological advancements.** As technology has developed, we have switched to more efficient technologies, including battery-operated devices.
4. **Market transformation.** Lighting and televisions are up to 80-percent more efficient due to changes in codes and standards. In addition, all of the new major appliances have increased efficiency grades.
5. **Cooling off.** Homeowners are exchanging their window air conditioning units for central air and consequently increasing cooling efficiency.
6. **Distributed generation has become more affordable.** Refurbished solar and wind resources, leasing programs, and falling capital costs have made distributed generation more affordable.
7. **Distributed generation has become more prevalent.** Sixty-eight percent of wind turbines installed in the U.S. between 2003 and 2012 were distributed generation.

Don't be a cautionary tale: distributed generation

The prevalence of distributed generation — or small and local generation — is increasing in the Northwest. Distributed generation generally requires net metering agreements between the customer and the utility. Because many utilities recover the majority of fixed costs through their energy charge, the energy rate level of reimbursement to net-metering customers could be detrimental for utilities.

The impact of net metering on utilities has been experienced elsewhere. Notably, the Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) is saying that solar projects are saturating the system and introducing grid instability. As a result, HECO has frozen new interconnection of solar installations. Meanwhile Arizona’s largest utility received approval from the state commission to charge a monthly grid fee to customers with solar systems.

State commissions are also responding to the rate issues posed by the adoption of distributed generation. The California Public Utility Commission allows utilities to implement fixed charges to net-metered customers meanwhile removing the limit on customer-owned renewable generation

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POWER SUPPLY & RATES

capacity. Similar changes to net-metering laws could also come to the Pacific Northwest over the next five years.

Your rates with distributed generation and energy efficiency

As average use declines over time, utilities will want to review rate-setting principles. Across-the-board increases or increases to just the variable rate are popular approaches to increasing revenues. However, these methods will need to change in order for utilities to stay on top of the changing consumption characteristics as they do not reflect the high fixed costs of the utility. Figure 2 illustrates how costs are recovered versus how costs are incurred for a typical Northwest utility.

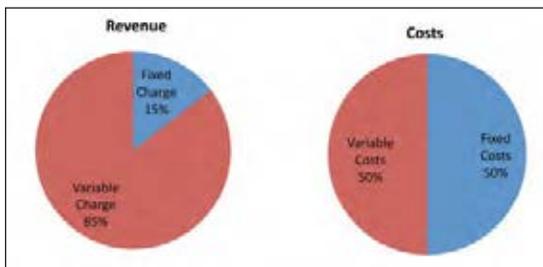


Figure 2

In practice, fixed (basic) charges vary significantly for Northwest utilities. Utilities with more customers per line mile would generally have a lower fixed cost per customer; however, there is no clear trend between customer per line mile

Whether or not your utility has experienced declining average residential use, preparing for industry changes with proper rates and promoting customer service through energy efficiency and distributed generation programs will ensure a viable and stable future.

and basic charges. Looking at a sampling of Northwest utilities, basic charges for utilities with fewer than 20 customers per line mile vary from \$10 to \$38 per month. The large variance in basic charges illustrates a trend emerging due to the willingness of utilities to better match basic charges with the fixed cost of the system.

Strategies

Navigating rate policies regarding distributed generation and energy efficiency can be a tricky exercise. The following strategies can help your utility thrive under changing electricity use profiles:

- Continue to promote/fund energy efficiency
- Provide options to customers interested in distributed generation
- Conduct cost-of-service studies and increase basic charges when necessary to bridge the gap between existing basic charges and the fixed cost of the system
 - Educate customers on rate components and why rates are changing
 - Take care of vulnerable customers (low and fixed income) by providing access to resources that will allow them to participate in energy-efficiency programs

Utility customers are using energy more efficiently than ever. Even with distributed generation, back-up power and grid services will still be needed. Whether or not your utility has experienced declining average residential use, preparing for industry changes with proper rates and promoting customer service through energy efficiency and distributed generation programs will ensure a viable and stable future. **NWPPA**

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RENEWABLES

by Genevieve Liang

Community solar offers a new path forward in growing distributed generation with customers



Community owners of the 500-kilowatt Breckenridge Sol Array in Summit County, Colo., pose for a photo op at the grand opening event hosted by Clean Energy Collective in late September 2013. Photo provided by Clean Energy Collective.

As solar energy becomes more mainstream in the public awareness, American utilities both large and small are trying to determine how to best incorporate solar into their resource mix, and how to handle the pathways via which consumers are adopting and using solar. Utility customers in most states are currently able to install an individual solar system on property that they own and interconnect it under the applicable net metering scheme, or they can lease a solar system owned by a third party that's built on property that the customer occupies. In either case, the customer is contracting for solar with little involvement from the utility except for the physical tie-in to the grid. This means the utility is neither providing nor managing the solution, as its historical role would indicate. The looming question that is becoming more dominant in electric utility managers' minds is: How can we actively engage with our customers and serve as their go-to source for solar, rather than being sidelined in this important conversation?

A meaningful, empowering community solar product is the answer. A relatively new concept that has gained increasing national traction in recent years, community solar is the idea that a group of citizens can pool their financial resources to realize a local solar project that provides the participants with shared benefits. Simple in theory, numerous challenges to actually creating a legal and viable community solar project make the task overwhelming for even the best-intentioned stakeholders. This is where the utility can take a leadership role: providing an equal platform by which all customers can exercise their solar interests, while at the same time allowing the utility to ensure quality of power production and customer satisfaction.

With a strong community solar program, a sponsoring utility can not only unite the growth of distributed generation with their own evolution as an energy service organization,

but they can also address the present lack of solar access faced by a majority of the population. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has noted that only 25 percent of all residential and commercial rooftops in the U.S. are suitable for onsite solar, which means that even among those customers who are property owners, there is unmet solar demand that the utility can assist with. Add to that the high percentage of residential and commercial renters, plus those who are discouraged by the substantial upfront cost of owning a full system, and the real potential impact of a community solar paradigm begins to take shape.

It is worthwhile to note here that there are existing, looser interpretations of community solar options, whereby customers pay a monthly premium or a subscription fee for solar power that is owned or procured by the utility. These frameworks are much more akin to green power programs already offered by many utilities, and they receive similarly low adoption numbers (national average is less than 50 percent of available capacity) with difficulty sustaining long-term customer participation. In our experience of partnering with utilities to structure true, functional community solar programs, we have seen time and again that customers respond to the opportunity to own a tangible solar product much more than just the usage of cleaner electricity. It is the difference between having direct agency over one's energy future, which is the experience imparted to those who can own solar by traditional means, versus being distanced by the lack of physical connection or claim.

When a utility decides to move forward with a community solar product that will have impact, there are multiple design considerations that the staff and board will need to consider. First, a balance should be achieved in terms of benefits to the stakeholders, which may include the utility, partici-

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RENEWABLES

pating customers, non-participating customers, and other facilitating parties. Next, the form and extent of these benefits should be defined in terms of energy production; resource value and savings; grid effects and renewable incentives; and how they can be best transacted between the parties. Third, defining the term of the solution will dictate operational sustainability of the plant as well as its lifetime benefit to customers. Finally, the overall program design will need to withstand any present and future legal, tax, and regulatory tests so as not to jeopardize the utility's charter and destabilize revenues. For each of the dozen-plus utilities across six states that we have worked with so far, these have been issues that we have successfully navigated to result in product offerings that pose the lowest risk to the utility.

In terms of implementation, you must also account for numerous practical areas. The right size of capacity to build and offer, and the timing thereof, is a significant matter — it should align utility goals and projected customer demand, as well as drive a healthy pace of adoption. Utilities all have their own customer compositions along with geographic diversity. For example, a Colorado cooperative utility with approximately 10,000 members has sponsored over one megawatt of community solar ownership, which is the same capacity as has been sponsored by a municipal utility partner in Colorado with 10 times the amount of customers. Relatedly, appropri-

ate customer marketing, education, and documentation must be used to ensure full compliance with consumer protection and fairness rules. There must also be a system and capability to manage customer participation long term, including necessary technical integration of production monitoring with benefit accounting to participants. Lastly, the solar plant itself needs to have dedicated financial resources to cover operations and maintenance over its lifecycle to optimize production.

American utilities can use the innovation of true community solar to re-focus customer interest in solar back to the utility, reduce threat from third-party providers, and simultaneously green their portfolios. According to *The Economist* (October 2013) and following the example of Germany's second-largest utility, RWE, which lost a third of its value over the past three years due to explosive distributed generation growth, utilities striving to endure will be orienting themselves towards a "prosumer" business model in which they will be "a project enabler and operator, and a system integrator of renewables." **NWPPA**

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Columbia River employees compete while donating



Columbia River PUD employees proudly display their certificates of achievement. Photo provided by Columbia River PUD.

The employees of Columbia River People's Utility District (St. Helens, Ore.) recently donated \$1,500 to the Columbia Pacific Food Bank (CPFEB).

The donations were collected during the PUD's annual employee food drive. During the drive, each department competes as a group for the honor of being recognized among the top givers. This year's honorees were the Administration Department — gold medal; Energy Efficiency & Communications Department — silver medal; and Information Technology Department — bronze medal.

"This comes at a crucial time for us," said CPFEB Executive Director Casey Wheeler. "Donations decline dramatically after the holiday season and these gifts from PUD employees will enable us to make sure that we are able to provide nutritionally balanced food boxes to those in need."

NWPPA

Grays Harbor hires new engineering manager

The Grays Harbor Public Utility District (Aberdeen, Wash.) has filled a key spot on its senior leadership team by hiring Schuyler Burkhart to serve as the PUD's engineering manager. Burkhart comes to Grays Harbor from Tacoma Power, where he serves as a senior supervisor in the Transmission & Distribution section. His first day with the PUD was March 31.

"This is a great day for the Grays Harbor PUD. The hiring of Schuyler Burkhart is a tremendous addition for the District and for Grays Harbor and finalizes the team that will lead the PUD for the foreseeable future," said

Commission President Russ Skolrood. "Schuyler brings with him a track record of success as both an engineer and a supervisor. I think he is a great fit for Grays Harbor and I can't wait to begin working with him."

Over his 20-year career, Burkhart has served as an engineer in several transmission and distribution roles; supervised engineering and operations teams for seven years; and has actively recruited professional positions and college interns. Schuyler's experience in the last 10 years was in transmission and distribution substation engineering; project management; and supervising engineering and meter, relay, and line service crews.

As engineering manager, Burkhart will supervise a 15-person staff, and plan, direct, coordinate, and manage engineering work and resource requirements to ensure efficient and safe use of PUD resources for the most cost-effective operation of the utility. NWPPA

Wittenberg retires from Blachly-Lane

Blachly-Lane Electric Co-op (Eugene, Ore.) Operations Manager Robert Wittenberg retired on Friday, March 21.

Wittenberg's impressive utility career spanned more than 40 years and several utilities, beginning with a bachelor's degree in power engineering from Washington State University. After earning his degree, Wittenberg went to work for Pacific Power in Portland, Ore. He then left Pacific Power in 1973 to work for Lower Valley Power and Light in Jackson Hole, Wyo., and then in 1978 went to work for Grand Valley Rural Powerlines in Colo.

While working and raising two daughters with his wife, Melissa, in Colorado, Wittenberg read an NWPPA *Bulletin* article about a brand new PUD forming in Eugene, Ore. Wittenberg and his family moved back to Oregon where he became instrumental in getting Emerald PUD up and running as a registered professional engineer and as their engineering manager. After 17 years at Emerald, Wittenberg left to become the general manager of Skamania County PUD in Carson, Wash., for 10 years. While there, he served as an NWPPA trustee from 2005-2011. Then in December 2011, Wittenberg returned to Eugene to be the operations manager for Blachly-Lane Electric Co-op.

After retirement, Wittenberg plans to ski more, visit grandchildren more, travel with his wife more, laugh more, and finally learn how to play golf. NWPPA



Mainzer firms up BPA front office

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Administrator **Elliot Mainzer** made major progress in strengthening his leadership team on February 26 by announcing that he has selected **Greg Delwiche** to serve as BPA's deputy administrator and **Claudia Andrews** to serve as chief operating officer. A week later, Mainzer continued to solidify the leadership team by selecting **Mark Gendron** as senior vice president of Power Services and **Cathy Ehli** as executive vice president of Corporate Strategy.

"Greg and Claudia both bring tremendous experience and dedication to BPA, great personal integrity, and interpersonal skills, and the respect and admiration of everyone who has had the pleasure of working with them," said Mainzer. "Mark and Cathy both have a wealth of executive-level electric utility experience. Their industry knowledge and background in customer service will be a substantial benefit to BPA and the Northwest."

Delwiche has served as acting deputy administrator since November 2013. He previously served as BPA's senior vice president for Power Services from June 2010 to November 2013. He has worked at BPA since 1992.

Andrews was appointed BPA's acting chief operating officer in July 2013. She previously served as BPA's executive vice president and chief financial officer, overseeing capital and debt management; accounting; cash management; and budgeting. She has worked at BPA since 1990.

Gendron was named BPA's acting senior vice president of Power Services in November when Delwiche was appointed acting deputy administrator. He has more than 30 years of electric utility industry experience and has spent the last nine years at BPA.

Since joining BPA in 1982 as a public utilities specialist, Ehli has spent most of her career in Transmission. In 2006, she was named vice president of Transmission Marketing



Greg Delwiche



Claudia Andrews



Mark Gendron



Cathy Ehli

and Sales. In March 2013, she shifted from Transmission Marketing and Sales to the top spot in Corporate Strategy, which was vacated by Mainzer when he began serving as BPA's acting deputy administrator. **NWPPA**

Clark recognized as a 2014 Customer Champion

For the third time, Clark Public Utilities (Vancouver, Wash.) has been named a J.D. Power Customer Champion. The utility is included in an elite group of just 50 companies setting the national benchmark for service excellence.

From a pool of more than 600 brands across nine major industries, Clark Public Utilities surpasses customer expectations, measured by the five key customer "touch points," which include people, presentation, process, product, and price.

Qualifying companies were identified based on customer feedback, opinions, and perceptions gathered primarily from J.D. Power's syndicated research as well as supplemental research. The 50 highest-performing companies delivering service excellence to U.S. customers each year are honored as J.D. Power Customer Champions.

"It's an incredible honor for our local utility to be included in such an elite group of companies recognized for always serving customers in the best ways possible," said **Byron Hanke**, president of the Clark Public Utilities Board of Commissioners. "There's no secret ingredient when it comes to keeping customers satisfied and the staff of this public utility works hard every day to power our community as reliably and affordably as possible while providing excellent customer service." **NWPPA**

Vigilante, Central Montana announce election results

Despite a 3.9-percent retail rate increase implemented in January, Vigilante Electric Cooperative's rates are still in the bottom one percent of electric utility rates nationwide, **Rollie Miller**, the co-op's general manager, told members at their 76th annual meeting on March 7 in Dillon, Mont. In trustee elections, **Tom Helm**, **Allen Martinell**, and **Jim Petersen** were all re-elected to three-year terms on the board.

Lower rates and the addition of a new member were among the developments this past year highlighted by **Doug Hardy**, manager of Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, in his report to the membership at the wholesale power co-op's annual meeting in Great Falls, Mont. In officer elections, there was no change; there was also no change in board membership. **NWPPA**

Energy Northwest appoints new PIO

Washington state joint operating agency Energy Northwest, located in Richland, Wash., recently announced that **Mike Paoli** is its new public information officer and manager of public affairs. Paoli has been with the agency since late 2009, and served previously as the public affairs assistant manager. He brings more than 24 years of experience to the job.



“We’ve been very pleased with how his team has responded to attempts by anti-nuclear groups to spread misinformation about Columbia Generating Station,” said **Brent Ridge**, vice president and Energy Northwest chief financial and risk officer. “He speaks honestly and plainly, a style we feel is essential for maintaining public trust and support for the value Energy Northwest and public power bring to the region.”

Prior to Energy Northwest, Paoli directed the Air Force Press Desk at the Pentagon, where he was part of a team that earned the Public Relations Society of America’s Best of Silver Anvil award for the dignified transfers of service members killed in combat and returned to American soil. He also commanded a NATO support squadron in Norway; directed public affairs for the Air Force’s largest combat wing in Okinawa, Japan; and directed the Air Force’s National Media Outreach office in New York, N.Y.

Paoli is a graduate of New Mexico State University; he also holds master degrees in human relations from the University of Oklahoma, and military operational art and science from the Air Force’s Air University. He is an Air War College graduate, has served as adjunct professor at the Defense Information School, and currently volunteers as an employee communication trainer for the City of Kennewick.

NWPPA

OPALCO acts to protect voting rights

The OPALCO Board (Eastsound, Wash.) voted unanimously to ensure that all cooperative members would be granted a vote and a voice in electing and retaining board members. The cooperative model relies on the premise of one vote for each member.

Article I, Section 10 of OPALCO’s bylaws has been revised to give all members the opportunity to vote in the case of a call for board member removal or replacement. The original language would have excluded absentee mem-

bers from having a voice in the matter. To review the details of the bylaw revision, please go to www.opalco.com/bylaws.

General Manager **Randy J. Cornelius** explained that the bylaw language was found to be out of compliance with current state law (RCW 24.06.110). “The board’s action today is meant to uphold and protect our members’ right to elect their directors,” said Cornelius. “This is integral to the strength and unity of our co-op.”

The issue came up during the regular meeting of the board in February when OPALCO’s legal counsel discovered the flaw in the bylaws. The board determined that, because of the timing of the Annual Meeting (May 3), immediate further discussion was warranted on this bylaw issue. In keeping with the bylaws on special meetings, the board met by phone on March 6 to discuss and act on the matter. NWPPA

Rivera hired as new Hermiston superintendent

On February 27, City Manager **Ed Brookshier** announced the appointment of **Nate Rivera** as the City’s new superintendent for its electric distribution utility, Hermiston Energy Services (Ore.). Rivera has been employed by Umatilla Electric Cooperative as its community relations representative for approximately 10 years. He assumed his new duties on March 24 and succeeded **Russ Dorran**, the City’s first electric superintendent, who passed away in January.

In announcing Rivera’s appointment, Brookshier noted that in addition to business management of the utility and the City’s operational contact with Umatilla Electric, he expects Rivera will actively work on regional hydroelectric advocacy matters and water development needs affecting the City’s interests, and that he will be a member of the City’s economic development team.

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with Nate on a variety of projects and issues over the years and have gained a great deal of respect for his abilities. We are proud to have him on the City team,” Brookshier said.

Commenting on his new position, Rivera said, “I’m honored and incredibly excited to serve the citizens of Hermiston in this position as we face the challenges of the future. I’m looking forward to building upon the great foundation the City and Russ Dorran have created. I’m thankful for the City’s confidence in me and look forward to getting started.”

Rivera and his family make their home in Hermiston. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska. NWPPA

Lora Provolt joins Lewis PUD

Lewis PUD (Chehalis, Wash.) is proud to announce that on January 27, **Lora Provolt** joined Lewis as their new HR manager. Provolt comes to Lewis PUD from Cowlitz PUD where she worked for nearly seven years, the last five in the Human Resource Department. She has a B.S. in business and is currently working towards her PHR (Professional in Human Resources) certification.



“I’m very excited to join the Lewis PUD team. I’m looking forward to building upon the great foundation the District has created. I’m thankful for the District’s confidence in me and look forward to meeting the HR needs,” said Provolt. **NWPPA**

Snohomish tidal project receives license

On March 20, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) voted unanimously to issue a license to Snohomish County Public Utility District (Everett, Wash.) for a tidal energy pilot project in Admiralty Inlet, west of Whidbey Island, Wash. The project — the first grid-connected array of large-scale tidal energy turbines in the world — includes installation, operation, and evaluation of two turbines at a depth of about 200 feet. The utility plans to move forward on contractual agreements, construction, and deployment over the next two years. The turbines would be installed for a period of three to five years.

In issuing the license, FERC commissioners commended the PUD for its diligence in securing the license and for its extensive studies and public engagement. It noted the PUD’s license plans to protect fish; wildlife; cultural and aesthetic resources; navigation; and existing infrastructure in Puget Sound.

“Anyone who has spent time on the waters of Puget Sound understands the power inherent in the tides,” said PUD General Manager **Steve Klein**. “In granting this license, the FERC acknowledges the vigilant efforts of the PUD and its partners to test the viability of a new reliable source of clean energy while at the same time ensuring the protection of the environment and existing uses.”

As part of its FERC license application, the PUD has addressed a broad range of issues, such as the pilot project’s design, operation, environmental studies, monitoring plans, and biological assessments. During its public process, the utility also engaged numerous stakeholders, including local, state, and federal agencies; tribal groups; business organizations; and residents. **NWPPA**

Franklin rate increase less than expected

On February 25, the Franklin PUD (Pasco, Wash) Commission voted to implement a rate action that would increase revenue by 3.0 percent across all rate classes.

Last year, consistent with the recommendation of its Rate Advisory Committee, which is comprised of customers from all rate classes, the board of commissioners approved a 4.9-percent rate increase effective May 1, 2013, and a second rate increase of 4.9-percent effective May 1, 2014. The approval was made with the understanding that the amount of the 2014 increase would be assessed after the 2013 financial results were known.

On February 12, the Rate Advisory Committee met and agreed to recommend to the board of commissioners a 3-percent increase effective May 1, 2014. After review of the 2013 financial results and 2014 budget numbers, they believed this smaller increase would allow the PUD to meet its financial obligations and minimize the near-term impact to customers.

While power costs represent nearly 70 percent of the annual budget for Franklin PUD, the PUD continues to look for internal efficiencies and cost reductions to keep rates as low as possible. **NWPPA**

Court awards \$19.3M to Energy Northwest

Last month, a federal court ruled to award Energy Northwest \$19.3 million in damages for the construction and licensing of a used fuel storage area at Columbia Generating Station. The ruling came nearly eight years after the court determined that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) was in breach of contract for its failure to accept the utility’s used nuclear fuel.

“This is another big victory for the region and the ratepayers of the Northwest,” said **Mark Reddemann**, Energy Northwest CEO. “However, this judgment does not resolve the issue of long-term storage of used nuclear fuel, nor does it lessen the legal obligation of the federal government to develop and manage that process.”

Though Energy Northwest and the nuclear energy industry continue to advocate completion and use of a national repository, Columbia’s used fuel can continue to be safely and securely kept for decades at the nuclear station’s above-ground dry storage area.

According to court documents, Energy Northwest represents one of more than 60 such cases filed by nuclear utilities. **NWPPA**

Orchard chosen as new SMUD CEO

Last month, Arlen Orchard, general counsel, has been named to succeed John Di Stasio as the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's (Calif.) general manager and chief executive officer.

Orchard, a 24-year SMUD veteran, verbally accepted the offer from the SMUD Board of Directors to fill the GM position after a national search. The appointment was finalized when the SMUD Board of Directors issued a formal approval at its April 3 meeting. Orchard will assume his new position on April 12; Di Stasio's last day as GM and CEO is April 11. Di Stasio announced his retirement last fall after working at SMUD for more than 32 years.

"I am honored to be chosen by the board of directors and humbled to be given the opportunity to run this great organization," said Orchard. "That the board chose from among the internal candidates speaks highly of the excellent work of SMUD's staff over the years."

Orchard says the focus on the customer and the community will continue to power SMUD forward.

"The utility industry and SMUD have many opportunities and also face many challenges. The guiding principle of delivering the best possible service and reliability at the lowest possible rates will continue to make SMUD a key community leader," said Orchard.

"SMUD attracted many strong candidates, each eager to lead one of the most progressive utilities in the world," said Genevieve Shiroma, president of the SMUD Board of Directors. "After many interviews, followed by thorough deliberation, it became clear that Arlen was the best choice to navigate SMUD through the increasingly complicated legislative and regulatory environment, while keeping our power generation running, making progress reducing our carbon footprint, and ensuring that electric rates remain affordable. Arlen's expertise as SMUD's general counsel for more than a decade will serve our customer-owners very well."

Orchard moves to SMUD's top post after serving as general counsel for SMUD since 2001. In that capacity, he served as SMUD's top lawyer.

Orchard joined SMUD in 1990 as a staff attorney and served as assistant general counsel before accepting the general counsel post. He serves on the NWPPA Board of Trustees and as the general counsel for the California Municipal Utilities Association. He also serves on the boards of directors of Capital Stage, a nonprofit professional theater company; the Greater Sacramento Urban League; and the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce.



NWPPA

Paperless billing arrives at Cowlitz

Cowlitz PUD (Longview, Wash.) customers now have a new convenient way to pay their electric bill, with the addition of paperless billing. Known as e-Bill, it will allow customers quicker access to their bill, the ability to review their billing history, and the convenience of making payments online.

"This is a voluntary program and we expect it to be very popular with many customers," said PUD Director of Customer Service Dave Andrew. "At the time your bill is processed — rather than the PUD printing and mailing a bill — an email is sent with the billing amount, due date, and a link to view the bill online. It's efficient, economical, and secure."

The threat of identity theft is reduced though e-Bill. To gain access to personal information, thieves try to break into mail boxes or go through trash to steal mail. By going paperless, customers eliminate paper bills and gain more control over sensitive documents. NWPPA

Visit grantpud.org for Wanapum updates

Grant PUD (Ephrata, Wash.) has established a page on its website devoted to the Wanapum Dam spillway response; the page can be found by clicking on the link on the left-side of the home page of the grantpud.org website.

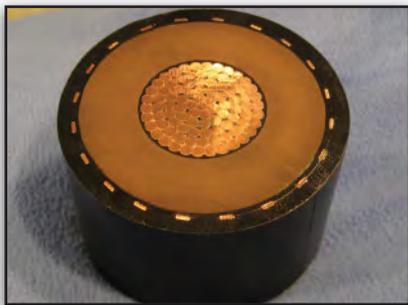
Links to press releases, photos, and background information are all located on the Web page, along with updates whenever new information becomes available.

Conditions at the dam and on the Wanapum reservoir shoreline remain unchanged as utility staff, contractors, consultants, and regulators continue to examine spillway pier monolith No. 4, which was discovered to have a fracture on February 27. The Wanapum reservoir has been temporarily drawn down in response to the fracture. The shoreline and reservoir, including all public-access points, remain closed in the interest of public safety. Grant PUD is working to address other issues resulting from the drawdown including modification of the fish ladders at Wanapum Dam and providing technical assistance to reservoir irrigators.

As the Wanapum Dam spillway response continues, Grant PUD is adjusting its schedule for news releases. Regular updates will be issued weekly on Mondays. However, the utility will provide more frequent updates on the situation whenever significant developments are made toward achieving its goal of restoring Wanapum Dam to normal operations. NWPPA

Kerite unveils new HV power cable

Kerite, a leading manufacturer of high-quality insulated utility underground power cable, recently announced a full line of high-voltage (HV) power cable, available in voltages ranging from 46kV thru 138kV.



Whether directly buried or in conduits, Kerite's HV cable is ideal for a wide variety of electrical transmission system applications, including internal substation bus connections, capacitor bank hook ups, congested transmission easements, power plant feeders, as well as river and bridge crossings, and industrial manufacturing facilities.

Kerite's unique insulation system ensures the ultimate in cable reliability, backed up by the best cable warranty in the business. The specially formulated discharge resistant ethylene propylene rubber DR-EPR® insulation has electrical, mechanical, thermal, and chemical properties that guarantee long-term field performance.

Kerite HV cable uses a proprietary non-conducting Permashield® stress control layer as the conductor shield, which allows for 100-percent testing during the extrusion process to ensure no voids or breaks that could result in premature cable failures.

Offered with either copper or aluminum conductors, Kerite HV power cables come with hundreds of options for conductor size, material, voltage, insulation system, metallic shielding, and jacket material.

Founded in 1854 and headquartered in Seymour, Conn., Kerite is a member of the Marmon Utility Group of companies. For more than 150 years, Kerite has manufactured the highest-quality insulated utility transmission and distribution power cable, as well as underwater power cable. For more information, visit www.kerite.com. **NWPPA**

NISC chosen by Pedernales

On March 11, Pedernales Electric Cooperative (PEC), based in Johnson City, Texas, announced that it has selected National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) as its primary provider of software services to support its operational and member services efforts.

PEC, a large distribution co-op serving nearly 260,000 meters, will take advantage of NISC's suite of applications to support its accounting, billing, mailing, engineering, operations, and member services needs. NISC's enterprise-wide iVUE® software platform offers PEC members the benefits of a fully integrated software package designed for

and used by 500 distribution cooperatives and mid-size utility systems in 48 states.

PEC selected NISC's suite of solutions to enhance member services. The cooperative considers member services paramount and plans to launch an automated phone system, outage management, proactive messaging, and an enhanced member portal with mobile applications.

"We are grateful that Pedernales' board and staff have given NISC the opportunity to support its ongoing mission of greater efficiency, reduced costs, and enhancements to its member service commitment," said Vern Dosch, NISC's president and CEO. "Our software has been shaped by 47 years of close collaboration with our members. Today, that collaboration is driving the development of new software solutions that meet our members' current needs and incorporates their creative vision."

National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) is an information technology organization that develops, implements, and supports software and hardware solutions for our members/customers. For additional information about NISC, visit www.nisc.coop. **NWPPA**

SPIDA® releases SPIDACalc v5.0

On February 20, SPIDA Software, an industry leader in structure analysis software, announced the release of SPIDACalc v5.0. This release comes at a time when SPIDACalc is becoming the preferred nonlinear calculation software for pole loading, pole strength, and guying analyses.

The management, engineering, and development teams at SPIDA are driven to offer software solutions that are one step ahead of the industry. The v5.0 release of SPIDACalc reaffirms SPIDA's commitment to staying ahead of the curve.

Among its added features, SPIDACalc v5.0 showcases a refined calculation engine that will enhance performance and set the stage for future feature development. These enhancements, along with others being introduced, cut down on the time spent analyzing a design and increases a user's productivity.

SPIDA recognizes that a utility's success is measured by reducing time spent on projects and increasing productivity. Aging infrastructure, government regulations, public scrutiny, and limited resources have forced utilities to re-evaluate current process and look for innovative solutions.

"I've experienced the challenges of the industry and understand that utilities and engineers need technology solutions that are easy to use and driven by results. Those are the fundamental principles in all SPIDA products," said SPIDA Software President Wil Schulze.

SPIDA Software has revolutionized the world of pole loading and has created industry-leading products that have improved utility efficiency and system reliability. For more information, please visit www.spidasoftware.com. **NWPPA**

OMICRON makes transformer testing portable

The new VOTANO 100 from OMICRON is the first voltage transformer testing and calibration system to combine mobility (total weight less than 33 pounds) with the highest level of accuracy (precise calibration of voltage transformers with class 0.1).



Voltage transformers in energy supply networks need regular tests and calibration in order to perform their protection and metering duties correctly. These tests, based on operator directives or national regulations, always required very complex and heavy test equipment in order to be accurate; this made the tests very time and cost intensive.

With its software-guided measurement, VOTANO 100 can test protection and metering voltage transformers in less than 20 minutes. In a single pass, winding resistance, short-circuit impedances, transformation ratio, and the magnetic characteristics curve of inductive and capacitive voltage transformers are determined. During this process, VOTANO 100 assesses voltage transformers with up to five secondary windings — both for no-load and standard-load operating conditions. The measured results are automatically assessed in accordance with international standards.

VOTANO 100 examines the voltage transformer as an electrical model that is captured and then mathematically simulated. This electrical modeling method was developed on the basis of OMICRON's successful CT Analyzer.

OMICRON is an international company serving the electrical power industry with innovative testing and diagnostic solutions. Services offered in the area of consulting, commissioning, testing, diagnosis, and training make the product range complete. For more information, contact Wayne Bishop at wayne.bishop@omicronusa.com. **NWPPA**

Evluma offers 10-year warranty

Evluma has introduced a 10-year warranty on its entire energy-efficient AreaMax LED lighting product line. The new warranty is based on over five years of field experience and a 25,000-plus

installed base in area and security lighting applications.

“Evluma’s long-term commitment to quality and customer service has accelerated the AreaMax’s adoption as the utility standard in area and security lighting,” said Keith Miller, president and CEO of Evluma. “Offering a 10-year warranty is an extension of this commitment not only to our customers, but to the members that they serve. Every utility should expect it.”

Carefully selected long-life components, extremely efficient thermal design, and the highest level of surge protection at 20kV combine to create this robust fixture. The glass refractor will never yellow, or fail due to UV exposure.

More than the sum of its parts, each AreaMax also comes with Photocontrol Failsafe technology built in. This revolutionary new technology takes over should the photocontrol ever fail, eliminating additional maintenance calls. Downstream from the 20kV surge protection, photocontrols experience long life when used with an AreaMax.

“Expensive photocontrols are often a hidden cost of a new LED fixture,” said David Tanonis, VP of Sales and Marketing at Evluma. “With the AreaMax, the photocontrol is only used as a sensor, not as a method of switching the mains. This allows utilities to salvage the existing photocontrol or purchase a low-cost new one.”

Formed in 2008, Evluma is committed to developing environmentally low impact LED lighting solutions that are affordable and long lasting. For more information, please contact Tanonis at (925) 998-4297 or dtanonis@evluma.com. **NWPPA**

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by Scott M. Lindsay

2014 resolutions approved for NWPPA membership consideration



NWPPA membership provides the collective voice that members lack as individual utilities. We are stronger if we are united as a group, and this process is designed to help identify those broad-based areas of agreement in support of a common agenda; folks have probably heard me say that more than once over the last 15 years of my association with NWPPA.

During the NWPPA Board meeting last month, the slate of proposed 2014 resolutions was set. On March 20, NWPPA's Government Relations Committee (GRC) approved the resolutions for consideration by the full membership during the May annual business meeting.

As is customary, the GRC is responsible for conducting the grassroots process to direct the Association's legislative and regulatory policies. This process is an important part of your membership, as it provides a forum for vigorous, internal discussion about important — and potentially contentious — policy issues. It allows for a full vetting of each issue, which will lead to a consensus position for the Association. These positions can then be carried to Congress or regulatory agencies with a unified voice, which is critical to our credibility, stature, and effectiveness in Washington, D.C., and within the region. The positions direct the legislative and regulatory activities of NWPPA's volunteer member advocates, consultants, and staff on behalf of the organization.

NWPPA membership provides the collective voice that members lack as individual utilities. We are stronger if we are united as a group, and this process is designed to help identify those broad-based areas of agreement in support of a common agenda; folks have probably heard me say that more than once over the last 15 years of my association with NWPPA.

Since 2009, the resolutions process has been initiated by a group of GRC members who volunteer to serve on the Resolutions Committee (ResCom). This year the ResCom is chaired by GRC Vice Chair Scott Egbert of Wells Rural Electric Company (Wells, Nev.). He, along with about 15 other members, helped to advance the current slate of 2014 proposed resolutions.

About four weeks prior to the March board meeting, the ResCom held a webinar to discuss and resolve all outstanding

issues related to resolutions under consideration and for review by the GRC. The group completed its work and prepared presentation-ready resolutions for consideration during the GRC meeting.

The following 2013 resolutions were approved for consideration with no or minimal revisions for 2014:

- 2014-01 Energy Efficiency
- 2014-02 Hydropower Is a Renewable Resource
- 2014-03 Protecting the Bulk Electric System from Cyber and Physical Attacks
- 2014-04 Reliability Standards and Enforcement Reform
- 2014-05 Integration of Variable Energy Resources
- 2014-06 Opposition to Changing the Role and Rates of the Power Marketing Administrations
- 2014-07 Urging EPA Consideration of Economic Impacts on Rural Utilities When Developing New Environmental Regulations
- 2014-08 Energy Imbalance Market
- 2014-09 Support for Tax-Exempt Financing
- 2014-10 Regulation of Utility Operations-Related Swaps Relied upon by Public Power Utilities

The following 2013 resolutions were approved and proposed to be archived in 2014:

- 40-2014 Regional Transmission Solutions
- 41-2014 Local Control of Retail Rate Setting and Conservation and Renewables Programs
- 42-2014 Improved Agency Cooperation for Utility Rights-of-Way on Federal Lands
- 43-2014 FERC Order 1000: Regional Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation

Lastly, the following new resolutions were approved for 2014 consideration:

- 2014-11 Urging Agencies to Consider the Economic Impacts on Utilities When Enforcing Wildlife Regulations
- 2014-12 In Support of Equitable Distributed Generation Policies

The above resolutions were approved in committee and will be presented to the membership at the Association's Annual Business Meeting on May 20, 2014, in Billings, Mont.

In terms of new or revised resolutions, the following are some highlights of interest:

- 2014-02 (hydro): Updated to reference related legislation that was introduced in 2013.
- 2014-03 (cyber and physical attacks): Updated to add physical security threats as an additional focal point following a California substation attack report.
- 2014-06 (PMA threats): Updated to reflect the current state of play in relation to efforts by the Department of Energy to centralize control over the power marketing administrations.
- 2014-11 (ESA): Originally drafted to address concerns over sage grouse, but was broadened to apply generally to encourage reasonable habitat protection plans.
- 2014-12 (DG): Drafted to address growing interest and proliferation of distributed generation (DG). It urges future actions to facilitate DG where it is safe, cost effective, and costs are equitably allocated.

These resolutions are posted on the NWPPA GRC website for the full membership to review prior to the May meeting in Billings, Mont. All member systems are encouraged to participate in this important legislative/policy process. Also, please make sure that a voting delegate and alternate from your utility have been signed up prior to the next GRC meeting. If you would like to sign up to represent your utility,



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please contact Debbie Kuraspediani at Debbie@nwppa.org.

The resolutions process is a great opportunity to help shape the policies that impact your consumers; your active involvement in the GRC and at the annual meeting is critical to NWPPA's success. **NWPPA**

Scott M. Lindsay is president of SML Consulting. For questions about the NWPPA resolutions, please contact Debbie Kuraspediani at Debbie@nwppa.org or (360) 816-1449.

by Brenda Dunn

The Walla Walla Way

How Columbia REA has successfully handled the wine and tourism explosion within its service area

For over a century after its incorporation in 1862, Walla Walla, Wash., remained a quiet, rural town known for its miles of rolling farmland and agriculture. It was a nice place to live, but not a destination for travelers. Then in 1977, the first winery, Leonetti Cellar, opened for business and the city dynamic began to change, albeit slowly at first. Walla Walla

received its distinguished AVA (American Viticultural Area) designation in 1984 with only four wineries and 60 acres of vineyards; however, 30 years later, the city has grown by over 20 percent to nearly 32,000 people with over 100 wineries and some 1,800 acres of vineyards. And with those wineries, come accolades, tourism, and rapid-fire growth. In 2011, *USA Today* named Walla Walla America's Friendliest Small Town; in 2012, *Sunset* named it The Next Big Wine Country; in 2013, *Fodor's* ranked Walla Walla as one of the 10 Best Small Towns in America; and in late 2013, little Walla Walla was included alongside international hotspots such as Rio de Janeiro, Hsinchu City (Taiwan), and Montreal on the Smart21 list of Intelligent Communities around the world. Already this year, *Sunset* has named it amongst the 24 Best Places to Work and Live in the U.S., and *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* has listed it as one of the 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations in the world. Needless to say, tourism to this little town has grown exponentially and doesn't seem to be slowing down as more wineries and businesses continue to move into the area. And as the small town continues through its growth spurt, the infrastructure to support it — including the local public power cooperative, Columbia REA — has to keep up as well.

Columbia REA's inception is not very different from most other small cooperatives across the country: farmers



In the last 10 years, Columbia REA staff has nearly doubled in size — from 29 to 52 full-time employees. To accommodate the growth, the REA purchased a building from the Port of Walla Walla and moved into it in January 2013. Photo provided by the Port of Walla Walla.

needed electrical distribution service and found it too expensive to hook up to the existing power distribution system. To address the situation, in 1935, seven farmers started a grassroots effort to form their own utility and went from farm to farm until they had 72 area farmers on board with them. In 1939, those 72 farmers formed Columbia REA and became

its first members. However, while many rural utilities stay rather consistent over the years and decades, Columbia REA has changed greatly since its formation 75 years ago. Now, the utility's membership is very diverse; rural farm accounts continue to be served by the REA, but over the years, large agriculture and commercial accounts have been added to the mix, and a growing number of urban and suburban residential accounts have been added even more recently. Today, the cooperative serves over 5,100 accounts covering over 3,000 square miles with 1,300 miles of distribution line.

The Walla Walla Way

Talking with businessmen in Walla Walla — whether its someone from the Port of Walla Walla, Tourism Walla Walla, or any of the numerous vineyards — you get a sense that above the awards, the tourism, and the growth, community is what still matters to this small town.

“Everyone pitches in to fund the development of the area — the governor calls it the Walla Walla Way,” said Elio Agostini, executive director of the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation. “It's unusual for everyone (the Chamber, Wine Alliance, Tourism, the City, the Port, the REA, the Downtown Foundation, etc.) to pitch in — you don't see this in big cities.”

It's no wonder that Columbia REA is so well liked by the community's business leaders; as the second largest contributor to the community (124-year-old Banner Bank is widely known to be the top contributor to the city and county), Columbia REA has taken its Concern for the Community principle to a level that many businesses would not.

"We firmly believe in and support our seven cooperative principles, especially Concern for the Community," said Columbia REA CEO Les Teel. "Columbia REA takes this commitment very seriously; Concern for the Community provides focus for what the cooperative can do to help enrich the community and members that we serve."

In addition to a healthy amount of monetary contributions, Columbia REA has pledged to be involved in the community in many other ways that make a significant impact. For example, cooperative employees sit on 15 different boards; the REA donates time and money to over 100 different organizations in the community; and the REA headquarters opens up its conference room for use by local non-profit organizations at no charge.

"The people that work for Columbia REA are involved in the community and that is what is important because they contribute back to the community — that's the big thing!" said Paul Gerola, economic development director at the Port of Walla Walla.

When asked if these community efforts add to the draw of Walla Walla for interested businesses and actually attract new businesses to the area, Agostini emphatically said that they do. "Oh yes, absolutely! It is up to the economic development non-profit organizations like mine to bring people to our community, but we exist only because of others like the REA who donate money and time to us. We couldn't do it without the donations from companies like the REA," he said. "The employees also contribute so much of their time — there are so many little things that they do! Contribution of time is critical."

Concern for the Community also means that Columbia REA will help businesses that are not members of the cooperative. For example, the cooperative has granted over \$400,000 in economic development loans to seven businesses; some of which are customers of their competitor, Pacific Power. When asked what the logic behind this was, Scott Peters, the REA's manager of marketing and member services, said, "People in this community do things that don't directly impact their membership because they are working for the greater good knowing that the greater good will work for their group also. That's the same tactic that the REA takes — we try to do things that don't directly affect our membership, but they do affect the community and the greater good and we know by our community being successful that we are. Like Elio said, it's the Walla Walla Way."

Adapting to change

"Diversification of the economy has probably made Walla Walla stronger than it was 30 years ago. Diversification in economic development is the key word for a sustainable economy. It's incredibly important," said Gerola. "Business models always change; but instead of having a few large businesses, we have a lot of smaller ones and that is important."

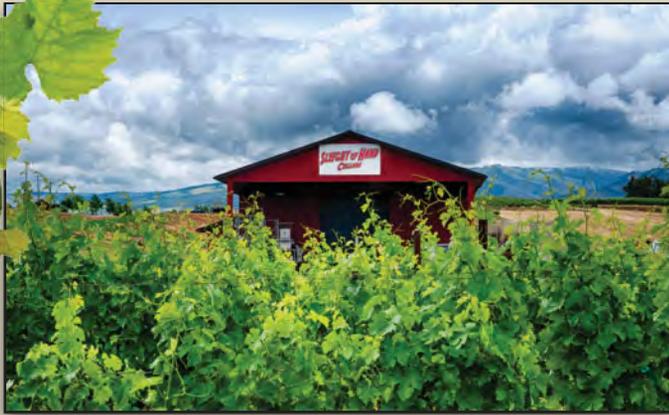
The booming wine industry has played a significant part in the area's diversification. While the number of wineries exploded by more than 700 percent throughout the Walla Walla Valley over the last 15 years (from just 14 wineries in 2000 to over 100 in 2014), Columbia REA was able to keep up with the expansion because they, too, were focused on diversification.

Continued on page 28



The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives balloon lights up Walla Walla during the Nite Glow at the annual Balloon Stampede. Columbia REA is a longtime sponsor of the Walla Walla Balloon Stampede, one of nearly 100 organizations/events that the REA annually supports throughout the community.

Photo provided by Columbia REA.



Sleight of Hand Cellars is one of the newer wineries on Columbia REA's lines. After operating a tasting room in downtown Walla Walla for three years, the winery bought property in Walla Walla in the fall of 2010 and opened a tasting room in the spring of 2011; a winery on the property soon followed that same year. Photo provided by Sleight of Hand Cellars.

"It's been the focus of the co-op since I showed up almost six years ago," said Peters. "One of my first charges was to diversify the membership of the cooperative to better align it with the diversification of the area."

While the wine industry (and subsequent tourism industry) has grown, the REA has done so, too, to keep up with the development. In the last 10 years, the staff has almost doubled from 29 full-time employees to 52, an increase of nearly 80 percent; and the number of accounts serviced has gone from 3,800 to 5,100, a 35-percent increase.

In order to comfortably house all of the new employees, in January 2013, Columbia REA moved into a new office that was purchased from the Port of Walla Walla.

"With that move, the cooperative not only benefited from the new office building, but so did the community — instead of erecting a new building, the co-op moved into a vacated building that had been empty for quite some time," said Teel. "We remodeled the old building, added to the beautification of the Port area, and are now paying taxes on property that was previously not bringing in any taxes."

Lessons learned

For other utilities facing unprecedented development in their service area, Peters suggests three guidelines: be an active partner by participating in the community; be responsive by making sure you are at the table from the beginning of any project; and accept that you may not be able to do things the way you have always done them.

Columbia REA and its employees constantly involve themselves not only with community activities, but by also helping to grow new businesses in the area. For example, Peters explained that the Chamber has a public policy position that advocates for business in the legislature and watches what is going on with the Council and county commissioners. The position is not funded by member dues;

The REA, like most of the town, has learned that when you shift your focus to the community, then your members, your cooperative, and your community all benefit and become stronger.

instead, it is funded by members who feel it is important to fund separately. "The REA made a five-year pledge to help because the co-op felt it was important for the success of the community," said Peters.

"We also made a five-year monetary pledge to support the Small Business Development Center so that local entrepreneurs can receive free one-on-one business advice," said Teel. "We believe this is an important decision to help grow our local economies."

Among the four main economic development groups in Walla Walla, Columbia REA has a solid reputation for being available and responsive to whatever the organizations may need from the cooperative.

"Columbia REA has been involved in economic development since I have been here and I've been here for 18 years. They have always been involved in business recruitment and are instrumental with businesses/customers having options — having two providers in the area allows new businesses to shop for their electrical rates," said Gerola. "When site selectors come to town, the REA is always well prepared and we get very responsive answers for new clients looking to move into the area. That is very important because new businesses want the answer now in a snap; if we have to wait a few days for an answer, we will lose the project. You have to be prepared and in all of the site visits that we have had, the REA has been very well prepared for that project; that's what we hear at the end of the day and that is what is important."

The REA, like most of the town, has learned that when you shift your focus to the community, then your members, your cooperative, and your community all benefit and become stronger. The Downtown Association follows a similar approach.

"The Downtown Association's position is that what is good for Walla Walla, what is good for Dayton, what is good for Milton-Freewater is all good for downtown Walla Walla. If we don't work with everybody, it's not going to work," said Agostini. "And I believe it's more true here today than it was 10-15 years ago because people have the same vision and values now, and they want to make things happen. I know it's unusual — you don't see this in big cities. Some people don't get it — they think it's all about them and if it's not about them then it's not good. But it works here."

With all of the praise from Agostini and his foundation, one would assume they are satisfied members of the REA; however, they are actually customers of the competition, Pacific Power.

“The REA does things that affect the greater good of the community even if who they are helping are not members,” he said. “My association is not even an REA member, but I am a huge REA fan because of all that they do for Walla Walla and the community.”

The next phase

Despite the abundance of growth over the past few decades, winery owners do not see a slowdown on the horizon.

“It will continue to grow — I don’t see a plateau in sight!” said Trey Busch, winemaker and partner of Sleight of Hand Cellars. “There is a tiny amount of land that is actually planted here; there is so much land available in the valley and the best vineyards haven’t been planted yet. Washington state has 850 wineries, Napa Valley alone has 1,000 — and the Walla Walla region is about the same size as Napa.”

The tourism numbers also point to continued growth. According to Ron Peck, executive director of Tourism Walla

Walla, the city lodging tax is above projection and its prognosis for 2014 is very good; over the last year, there was a 5-percent increase in travel at the Walla Walla Airport; and the repeat visit numbers to the city are off the charts.

“The town sells itself: the wine gets people here, but the ambiance gets them to come back,” said Peck. “People appreciate the small-town ambiance of Walla Walla, and credit goes to the REA and others for preserving the unique aspects of the small town.”

So where does the cooperative see itself in the next 10-20 years?

“We will continue to grow with the community to meet the needs of our members,” said Teel. “As a not-for-profit cooperative, our goals are safety, reliability, and cost — and that is what we will continue to focus on here in the Walla Walla Valley.”

Brenda Dunn is the associate editor of the Bulletin. She can be contacted at Brenda@nwppa.org.

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The Job Opportunities is a service provided to NWPPA member systems and associate members. Member price is \$110 per listing for a 30-day period.

- Job Opportunities ads are also accepted from non-members. Ads are \$330 per listing for a 30-day period.
- *Copy must be received before the 25th of the month prior to the month of publication* (for example, February 25 for March issue).
- The *Bulletin* is mailed by the 15th of each month.
- Complete the online Job Opportunities ad placement form at www.nwppa.org.
- NWPPA reserves the right to edit all listings in order to fit size requirements in the publication.

POSITION: General Manager

COMPANY: Marias River Electric Cooperative (Shelby, Mont.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 15, 2014.
TO APPLY: Send resumé with three references and salary history to Shirley Kronebusch, Office Manager, Marias River Electric, P.O. Box 729, Shelby, MT 59474.

POSITION: Engineer II

COMPANY: Homer Electric Association (Homer, Alaska)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 18, 2014.
TO APPLY: Apply online at www.homerelectric.com, under *Careers*.

POSITION: Metering Supervisor

COMPANY: Modesto Irrigation District (Modesto, Calif.)
SALARY: \$105,123-\$134,576 annually.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 18, 2014.
TO APPLY: Applications and detailed job description can be found at www.mid.org.

POSITION: Relay Crew Leader

COMPANY: Modesto Irrigation District (Modesto, Calif.)
SALARY: \$90,646-\$116,043 annually.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 18, 2014.
TO APPLY: Applications and detailed job description can be found at www.mid.org.

POSITION: Document Management Analyst (MAI)

COMPANY: City of Tacoma (Tacoma, Wash.)
SALARY: \$49,108.80-\$62,961.60 annually.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 18, 2014.
TO APPLY: Complete an online application and attach a resumé and cover letter that includes major responsibilities and accomplishments related to this position.

POSITION: IT Administrator/Network Administrator

COMPANY: Northern Lights (Sagle, Idaho)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 18, 2014.
TO APPLY: Direct questions and resumé to Tim Cochran, Assistant Manager, tim.cochran@nli.coop.

POSITION: Journeyman Lineman

COMPANY: Sun River Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Fairfield, Mont.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 21, 2014.
TO APPLY: Application and instructions are available online at www.sunriverelectric.coop.

POSITION: Technology Consultant

COMPANY: Cowlitz PUD (Longview, Wash.)
SALARY: DOQ.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 21, 2014.
TO APPLY: For a complete list of qualifications and an application, go to www.cowlitzpud.org.

POSITION: Distribution Design Engineer

COMPANY: Brown & Kysar Inc. (Battle Ground, Wash.)
SALARY: DOQ.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 22, 2014.
TO APPLY: Email resumé to Rick Vermeers, General Manager, rickv@bki.cc.

POSITION: Substation Design Engineer

COMPANY: Brown & Kysar Inc. (Battle Ground, Wash.)
SALARY: DOQ.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 22, 2014.
TO APPLY: Email resumé to Rick Vermeers, General Manager, rickv@bki.cc.

POSITION: Supervisor Transmission Services #68929

COMPANY: Puget Sound Energy (Bellevue, Wash.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 22, 2014.
TO APPLY: Apply online at www.pse.com/careers.

POSITION: Chief Executive Officer

COMPANY: Lane Electric Cooperative (Eugene, Ore.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 23, 2014.
TO APPLY: Contact Ken Holmes, NRECA Executive Search, executivesearch@nreca.coop.

POSITION: Utility Economic Analyst

COMPANY: EES Consulting, Inc. (Kirkland, Wash.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 24, 2014.
TO APPLY: Send resumé and writing sample to careers@eesconsulting.com or EES Consulting, Inc., 570 Kirkland Way, Ste. 100, Kirkland, WA 98033. No phone calls please.

POSITION: Safety Manager

COMPANY: ESCI Inc. (Bellingham, Wash.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 24, 2014.
TO APPLY: Email resumé to brian@esci.net.

POSITION: Senior Engineer

COMPANY: Golden Valley Electric Association (Fairbanks, Alaska)
SALARY: TBD.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 27, 2014.
TO APPLY: Submit a completed application by mail, fax (907) 458-6367, or email rmr@gvea.com.

POSITION: T&D System Operations Manager

COMPANY: Tacoma Power (Tacoma, Wash.)
SALARY: \$118,456.00-\$151,860.80 annually.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: April 30, 2014.
TO APPLY: Apply online at www.mytpu.org/jobs.

POSITION: Manager of Engineering

COMPANY: Glacier Electric Cooperative (Cut Bank, Mont.)
SALARY: Commensurate with experience.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: May 1, 2014.
TO APPLY: Submit resumé, cover letter, and salary requirements to Jasen Bronec, General Manager, 410 East Main St., Cut Bank, MT 59427 or jbronec@glacierelectric.com.

POSITION: Senior GIS Programmer/Analyst

COMPANY: Matanuska Electric Association (Palmer, Alaska)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: May 20, 2014.
TO APPLY: Complete and submit an MEA application online at www.mea.coop.

POSITION: Senior Programmer Analyst
COMPANY: Matanuska Electric Association (Palmer, Alaska)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: May 23, 2014.
TO APPLY: Complete and submit an MEA application online at www.mea.coop.

POSITION: Journeyman Meterman and/or Journeyman Relay/Meter Technician
COMPANY: Central Lincoln People's Utility District (Newport, Ore.)
SALARY: \$41.41 or \$42.06 per hour.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Send resumé to Personnel, Compensation, & Benefits Manager, Central Lincoln PUD, P.O. Box 1126, Newport, OR 97365, fax (541) 574-2122, or email to styler@cencoast.com.

POSITION: Chief Financial Officer/Chief Risk Officer
COMPANY: Klickitat PUD (Goldendale, Wash.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Application and instruction can be found at www.klickitatpud.com.

POSITION: Journeyman Lineman
COMPANY: Wells Rural Electric Company (Wells, Nev.)
SALARY: DOE.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Send resumé along with a completed WREC application to Wells Rural Electric Company, Attn: Human Resources Dept., P.O. Box 365, Wells, NV 89835, or fax (775) 752-3407.

POSITION: Distribution Engineering Supervisor (DES)
COMPANY: Mission Valley Power (Pablo, Mont.)
SALARY: DOQ.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Job description and application can be found at www.cskt.org.

POSITION: Staff Engineer
COMPANY: Midstate Electric Cooperative (La Pine, Ore.)
SALARY: DOQ.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Submit resumé and cover letter to Human Resources, Midstate Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 127, La Pine, OR 97739, fax (541) 536-1423, or email smiesen@mse.coop.

POSITION: Journeyman Lineman
COMPANY: Nushagak Electric & Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (Dillingham, Alaska)
SALARY: \$30.61-\$39.34 per hour.
DEADLINE TO APPLY: Open until filled.
TO APPLY: Submit resumé and application to Nushagak Electric & Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Attn: Gayla Powers, P.O. Box 350, Dillingham, AK 99576, or email to gpowers@nushagak.coop.
 Application may be found at www.nushtel.com. **NWPPA**

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To learn more about the duties and qualifications of this position, go to our website at www.clarkpublicutilities.com. Click About Us then Job Opportunities.

Clark Public Utilities offers excellent benefits, an attractive wage, and company incentive programs. Resumes may be submitted to jobs@clarkpud.com or to Clark Public Utilities, Human Resources, P.O. Box 8900, Vancouver, WA 98668.

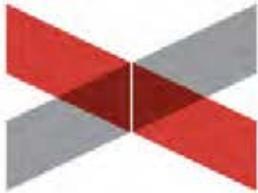
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