



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 11, No. 2

## *Electrical Safety – PUD Safety Trailer Teaches Important Lessons*

Once again this spring Cowlitz PUD is offering to help educate local school children about the importance of electrical safety. We offer a two-part school program for 4th grade students, as many local schools teach a section on electricity to that age group. Our goal is to make kids fully aware of the importance, and potential dangers of electricity.

The school program takes about an hour, and includes a classroom electrical safety discussion, video and activity book – prior to moving outside where PUD line crews put on a live safety demonstration using our safety trailer.

The trailer was built by PUD line crew employees and, as shown in these photos, includes overhead and underground lines, poles and other electrical equipment. The display is



connected to an electrical source so we can demonstrate to the school kids what happens when kites, ladders, animals and people touch electric wires.

The PUD has been able to take the display to many schools the past two years and has had a good response from students, teachers and parents. If your school is interested in scheduling the PUD's electrical safety program please give us a call at (360) 577-7515.

# Winds are *Blowing* in Klickitat County



*The White Creek Wind Project is complete and producing electricity in the Columbia River Gorge, about 20 miles east of Goldendale, WA. In its first full month in December, the project produced 60,000 megawatt hours of electricity. On an annual basis White Creek is projected to produce enough electricity to serve the equivalent of 38,000 average Northwest homes. Cowlitz PUD will purchase 46 percent of the White Creek power over the next 20 years.*

## Sign-up for the Low-Income Disabled Rate Program Until March 31

The deadline to sign up for Cowlitz PUD's low-income disabled customer rate discount is March 31. Qualifications for the new discounted rate include:

- Having residential electric service for at least the past 12 consecutive months
- Documentation of a disability (handicapped parking permit or physician's certificate)
- Earn a disability income (SSI, SSDI)
- Meet a low-income standard – A 10 percent rate discount is available to customers with a combined household income of \$13,691 to \$20,535. A 20 percent rate discount is available to customers with a gross annual household income of \$13,690 and less.

Customers not eligible at this time will next have an opportunity to apply beginning in September.

Cowlitz PUD has contracted Lower Columbia CAP to administer the program. CAP will meet with each applicant to review all necessary documentation and determine if they are eligible for the rate discount. The CAP office phone number is (360) 425-3430. Questions can also be directed to Cowlitz PUD at 423-2210 or (800) 631-1131.

## Cowlitz PUD's Fuel Mix

Cowlitz PUD and all other electric utilities in the state report their sources of wholesale electricity to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) each April. From that information CTED develops a utility-by-utility fuel mix breakdown.

State law calls for utilities to provide this information to customers twice a year. The chart on the top lists Cowlitz PUD's most recent fuel source report, while the table on the bottom lists the breakdown for all utilities in Washington:

Fuel type	PUD mix
Coal	2.2%
Hydro (Water)	86.8%
Nuclear	10.0%
Other*	1.0%

\*Includes biomass, natural gas, petroleum and waste incineration.

Fuel type	State mix
Coal	17.0%
Hydro (Water)	69.0%
Natural Gas	8.0%
Nuclear	5.0%
Other*	1.0%

\*Includes biomass, petroleum, waste incineration and wind.

## What's Happening

**The AARP Tax Aide Program** offers free income tax preparation this tax season to seniors and low-income individuals at:

### Longview Senior Center

Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to noon

### Canterbury Inn

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

### Longview Library

Friday and Saturday, 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Taxpayers seeking help should bring: Last year's return, photo ID, Social Security cards for all dependents, W-2 and 1099 forms and receipts for medical expenses, contributions, property taxes, continuing education.

Electronic filing is available. By furnishing an account number and bank routing number, refunds can be sent directly to your bank or credit union. If you have any questions, please contact Autie Bergman at (360) 636-3988.

*As space is available in Connected, Cowlitz PUD offers the What's Happening column to provide public, non-profit groups with wide interest in Cowlitz County an avenue to promote their activities (on a first-come, first-served basis). Please send your request via email to: [whathappening@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:whathappening@cowlitzpud.org).*

## Automated Metering - *Is Radio Interference a Concern?*

By 2011 as part of the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project, every customer will have a new meter that communicates on a real-time basis with computers in the PUD office via a signal over power lines. It will allow us to read your meter automatically from the PUD office. One day you'll be able to monitor your electric usage online.

We have had many great questions from customers about the new system. A local federally-licensed amateur radio operator asked if the new system could create interference to on-air radio activities, since some type of data communication services transmitted over power lines have caused interference issues.

We found in our research from the vendor Cannon that this is a narrow-band system which operates at very low

## Commission Activities



January Board highlights:

- **Met in a workshop with PUD Power Resource staff to discuss the 2008 Integrated Resource Plan and Phase 3 of the White Creek Wind Project.**
- **Approved acceptance of work by contractor Innerpole Investigations, Inc. for the 2007 Pole Inspection and Treatment Program.**
- **Heard testimony from a customer on the 12-month residency requirement of the new low-income disabled rate program.** Those comments will be included in the Board's program review discussion in August 2008.
- **Attended Washington PUD Association meetings in Olympia** to work with other PUDs on 2008 state legislative issues addressing the electric and water utility industry.

### Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, February 26 • Tuesday, March 11

These public meetings are held in the PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue in Longview at 2:00 p.m. Please check our website for up-to-the-minute Board agendas, meeting dates and times.

frequencies (8 to 13 KHz). It was invented in the early '80s and has been in use at electric utilities using millions of electric meters for over 20 years. We have heard that broadband over power line systems invented in recent years did operate in bands reserved for radio amateurs. However ours is a well tested, much older, low-band system, which has operated without interfering with radio amateurs (or other systems) for decades. Cannon tells us that some of the early developers were licensed radio amateurs.

If you have a question about automated metering, please email it to us at [customercomments@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:customercomments@cowlitzpud.org) and type "Automated Metering" in the subject line. If you don't have email access, send your question to Cowlitz PUD, 961 12th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632. Please write "Automated Metering" next to the address.

## From the General Manager's Point-of-View...

Over the past four years the PUD Board has adopted two programs to assist certain people with their electric bills. One provides a rate discount to customers aged 65-and-over, whose income falls below certain guidelines. The other program provides the same discounts to customers with demonstrated disabilities.



While making the decision to offer rate discount programs our Commissioners weighed their compassion and belief in helping low-income elderly and disabled people in our community, against the need to make sure only those truly meeting the criteria receive the discount. While the rate impact of these programs is extremely small, the Board members understand it's their job to assure customers that these programs aren't abused. The programs are reviewed each summer, at which time the Board decides whether to continue them and if any changes are needed.

The PUD offers another program to help out those facing difficulty in paying their bills – and that's our Warm Neighbor program. It is supported by voluntary contributions from customers like you. Many of you elect to add a few dollars to your PUD payment each month. Others add in some extra dollars on occasion or send a donation directly to CAP. However you choose to do it, it's appreciated. Your gifts to Warm Neighbor amount to over \$30,000 each year, meaning an additional 300-400 customers get help paying their electric bill.

CAP uses this fund to help local PUD customers not qualified under the senior or disabled rate programs. The recipients may be working poor – or people who have not needed assistance, but temporarily find themselves needing a little help. In getting ready to write this column I asked CAP to provide me with examples of some situations where Warm Neighbor funds were used.

One was a couple with two young children, who had never asked for help before. The husband was in a car accident, lost his job and lost the medical insurance that came with it. It left him unable to work and he doesn't know if or when an insurance settlement will be reached. The wife is working a minimum wage part-time job that doesn't cover the mortgage payment, utilities, food, etc. CAP used Warm Neighbor funds to help them through this difficult time, and reports the couple is very thankful for all the help.

Another example is a senior citizen living on a small pension who can't find employment to supplement that pension, which does not cover rent and utilities, let alone buy food, etc. She has one grown child that pays her rent so she will have a warm place to live. As with many seniors, she does not like to rely on programs like Warm Neighbor, but, with no other direction to turn she is glad the program is here to help. I know there are many more stories just like these.

One thing that struck me when I moved to Cowlitz County in 2003 was the generous spirit of its residents. I know many of you donate to a variety of causes in the community. To those of you who are contributing to Warm Neighbor, thank you. To those of you who don't, we would appreciate your consideration. Every little bit helps, and it's always appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Skeahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Brian Skeahan  
General Manager

*(Note: To contribute to the Warm Neighbor fund, just add an extra amount to your next payment and note that amount on the space allotted on your PUD bill. You can also contact CAP and make a direct donation.)*

## Contact Information

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