



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 11, No. 8

*September is National Emergency Preparedness Month*

## Are you ready if the lights go out?

Following a summer of warm weather it's hard to believe that the first big storms of the fall are just weeks away. We can expect wind storms to hit Cowlitz County shortly after fall arrives in October or November – and those first big storms often cause wide-spread power outages.

As part of National Emergency Preparedness Month we want all PUD customers to be ready if the lights go out.

### Three basic power outage preparation tips:

- ◆ Create an emergency preparedness kit that contains flashlights with extra batteries and a battery-powered radio. Know where to find the kit in a dark house.
- ◆ Cordless phones do not work without electricity, so have a “corded” telephone available.
- ◆ Know how to open your electric garage door opener when the power is out.

To report a power outage, call the PUD anytime of day or night at 423-2210 or (800) 631-1131. If you receive multiple busy signals, there is a good chance your neighbors are already calling to report the outage. The PUD calls out service repair crews at the onset of a power outage.

### If the power goes out:

- ◆ Unplug electronics — computer, TV, microwave — and don't turn them on again until lights have returned to normal brightness.
- ◆ Turn down thermostats and turn off the water heater circuit breaker to help reduce initial electric demand when power is restored.

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- Discount rates available for low-income senior and disabled customers
- A Message From the General Manager

- ◆ Do not open refrigerators or freezers.
- ◆ If you use a generator, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Place it outside for proper ventilation while running. Never use barbecues or propane heaters indoors.
- ◆ Leave a porch light switched on, as well as a light inside your home to let PUD repair crews and you know when service is restored.
- ◆ Most importantly stay away from downed lines and never touch objects that are in contact with downed lines. Teach children to assume that any downed utility line carries electricity and is dangerous.

Cowlitz County Department of Emergency Management:  
[www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/dem](http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/dem) or (360) 577-3130.

Cowlitz PUD: [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org) (click on “electrical safety”) or (360) 423-2210

### NEVER FORGET...

**Stay away from downed lines and never touch objects that are in contact with downed lines. Teach children to assume that any downed utility line carries electricity and is dangerous.**

**Your safety – and the safety of our PUD repair crews – is our first priority during a power outage.**

## Discount Rates Available for Low-Income Senior and Disabled Customers

Low-income senior and disabled customers of Cowlitz PUD can apply this fall for a discounted electric rate in 2008-2009. Lower Columbia Community Action (CAP) manages the low-income discount programs for the PUD.

The three-month sign-up period ends December 1, 2008. PUD customers who believe they qualify must first call CAP at (360) 425-3430 and make an appointment to determine their eligibility for a rate discount.

The PUD offers discounted electric rates up to 20 percent for qualified low-income customers who are age 65 or older – or are disabled and earn a disability income. To qualify:

- The customer must occupy the subject premises and be age sixty-five (65) or older (senior rate), or be disabled and earn a disability income (disabled rate).
- Customers can only participate in one of the rate discount programs, even if they meet the requirements of both.
- Electric service must be in the qualified low-income

customer's name and they must have been signed for service as a Cowlitz PUD residential electric customer for not less than the past 12 consecutive months.

- The customer must provide proof of age (SDR), or provide proof of a disability (DDR), and proof of income. Low income standards are based on 2008 federal guidelines:

Persons in HH	Gross HH income 20% discount	Gross HH income 10% discount
2 or less	under \$14,000	\$14,000 - \$21,000
3	under \$17,600	\$17,600 - \$26,400
4 or more	under \$21,200	\$21,200 - \$31,800

During 2007-2008 a total of 646 PUD customers applied for and received a discounted electric rate. The net cost of the programs over the past 12 months, after Cowlitz PUD received a Public Utility Tax credit, was \$41,665.

More information is available at [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org) or by contacting CAP or Cowlitz PUD.

## 2008 Relay for Life



*Cowlitz PUD employee Kelsey Graham joined 50 PUD employees and their families to raise \$13,300 at the American Cancer Relay for Life, August 9-10 at the Fairgrounds. Four PUD teams joined over 80 others from around the area to raise a record \$227,000 in the 24-hour event.*

## PUD Office Closed Monday, Oct. 13

Cowlitz PUD will be closed on Monday, October 13. We will use that day for employee training and special projects – much like an in-service day for teachers. We chose the second Monday in October since it is a federal holiday (Columbus Day) and many government offices and banks are closed.

Our 24-hour dispatch center will be open if you have a power outage or other electrical emergency to report. If you would like to pay your bill that day, we suggest that you visit one of the conveniently-located PUD pay stations, which are listed on the back of your PUD bill.

## Invest in Green Power – Just \$2 a Month!

Support the development of environmentally friendly “Green Power” sources like wind, solar, low-impact hydro, geothermal and biomass, for just \$2 per 100 kilowatt hours, added to your monthly bill. To learn all the details:

1. Log on to [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org)
2. Go to the **Conservation and Renewables** menu
3. Click on **Purchase Green Tags**

## What's Happening

### County Residents Still Owed \$850,000 in Stimulus Payments

#### ***Deadline to Apply Is October 15, 2008***

Over 2,000 residents of Cowlitz County have yet to apply for their federal economic stimulus payments, including many seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Stimulus payments, which begin at \$300 per individual and may increase by size of family, should not affect other benefits being received, such as Social Security, Food Stamps or Medicaid. Anyone who has not yet applied is encouraged to do so, even if they are unsure if they qualify.

Seniors, their family members or their caregivers may contact **Lower Columbia CAP** (425-3430) or **Cowlitz County United Way** (423-5320) for details regarding local sites where free application assistance will be provided to residents 60 or older. Anyone may contact the IRS directly at 1-866-234-2942 / [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

*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: [whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org).*

## Commission Activities



#### August highlights:

- **Approved the 2008 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which outlines the PUD's long-term resource strategy for the next 20 years.** All Washington electric utilities with 25,000+ customers are required by state law to file an IRP with the state every two years beginning this year.
- **Presented a check to CAP for \$2,640 for the Warm Neighbor program and to the American Cancer Society for \$2,640 for the Relay for Life.** The funds were raised through the volunteer efforts of PUD employees at PUD Bingo at the Cowlitz County Fair.
- **Approved the purchase of 540 electric transformers at a total cost of \$668,275.** This order is intended to meet the PUD's projected needs for new distribution transformers for the rest of 2008 and 2009.

#### Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, September 23

Tuesday, October 14

Tuesday, October 28

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.

## Automated Metering - *Installation begins in Castle Rock area*

As part of its Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project, Cowlitz PUD meter technicians have installed about 5,000 new automated meters this year (through August) on the way to a goal of 10,000 in 2008. All together in 2007 and 2008 the PUD has installed nearly 7,000 new meters, mostly in residential areas of Longview.

By the end of 2011 all 48,000 PUD customers will have a new automated meter that communicates on a real-time basis with computers in the PUD office, via a signal over power lines. Meters will be read automatically from the PUD office. One day you'll be able to monitor your electric usage online and set your monthly billing date.

#### **Castle Rock customers next in line for new meters**

PUD meter technicians have begun installing automated meters in Castle Rock, and will eventually move out to the

Delameter and Toutle areas later in the fall. Even if your new meter has been installed, the PUD will continue to send a meter reader to read it until further notice.

Besides installing the new meters, the AMI project includes new software and new equipment in all of our substations. Earlier this summer both the Seventh Avenue and Washington Way PUD substations were AMI commissioned, meaning communications have been configured and tested from the main office server out to the computer control units in both substations.

*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. You can also send your question to us at 961 12th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632. Please write "Automated Metering" next to the address.*

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

I was recently invited by Congressman Earl Blumenauer from Portland to participate in a regional panel discussion on renewable energy issues. Our discussion centered primarily on the steps we must take to be able to fully utilize renewable energy sources to meet future electric demands, while facing future limitations on carbon-emitting generation resources such as coal.



The Congressman was particularly interested in the need for new transmission lines to deliver the electricity produced by renewable projects, like wind turbines and geothermal power. He is aware that we must maintain and rebuild vital parts of our nation's infrastructure because it's getting old, worn out or is inadequately sized to meet consumer needs – today and tomorrow.

Last October, not long after the Minneapolis bridge collapse, I shared my opinion that today's generation must rebuild and improve America's aging infrastructure. That infrastructure was built by previous generations and has served us well through the years. But a lot of it is wearing out.

There is plenty of infrastructure in the electric utility business – power lines, transformers, substations, meters, etc. – and Cowlitz PUD is already addressing its future needs. Last fall our engineering staff introduced a seven-year plan for electrical system improvements in Cowlitz County, and the associated spending necessary to make it happen.

That plan was approved by the PUD Board of Commissioners, and today our engineering and operations departments are working hard to implement it.

As a start, from 2008 through 2010 we will rebuild two existing substations and upgrade two other substations in anticipation of converting our 69,000 volt transmission

system to a more-efficient 115,000 volts. We will also build or rebuild three miles of transmission lines and 80 miles of distribution lines, plus replace numerous old and deteriorating poles and transformers. As you read monthly in this newsletter, we are also in year two of a five-year project to install our new automated metering infrastructure.

These projects are intended to meet growing loads from new and existing customers. We are replacing old facilities at the end of their useful lives, improving the reliability and quality of our electrical service and offering new service alternatives to you.

Of course projects like these cost money, and you know as well as I do that materials cost a lot more today than they used to. In our business the cost of a typical distribution transformer (like the one in your yard or on a nearby pole) is up 77 percent over the past five years. The cost of underground cable has risen 115 percent from five years ago. In the same period the cost of wood poles has jumped over 80 percent.

While increasing costs certainly keep our attention focused on the need to spend customer dollars prudently, they are not a good reason to not do the work. The cost of replacing and maintaining our infrastructure won't decrease in the next several years. And the resulting costs and problems associated with not doing the work will not go away by simply ignoring the problem.

I'm glad to be able to report to you that Cowlitz PUD is taking an aggressive approach and making sure our kids and grandkids have a reliable and effective electrical system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Skeahan', written in a cursive style.

Brian Skeahan  
General Manager

## Contact Information

Cowlitz PUD - 961 12th Avenue  
PO Box 3007 Longview, WA 98632  
(360) 423-2210 - Toll free WA (800) 631-1131  
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Email: [customercomments@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:customercomments@cowlitzpud.org)

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