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Power surge sparks fire

By GABRIEL BOEHMER
Of the Emerald

A fallen EWEB power line caused about a 20-minute campus-wide blackout that damaged some University equipment Thursday afternoon.

According to an EWEB representative, the "very old line" burned off its connection and fell onto a sawdust pile behind the University's physical plant.

The subsequent loss of power caused a ventilation motor in Gerlinger Annex to overheat, and damaged the data system in the computer center.

The smoldering motor filled Gerlinger Annex with smoke, and brought five Eugene Fire Department units to the scene. Several hundred dollars damage was done to the motor, according to physical plant director Harold Babcock.

In the computer center, three days' registration data was lost and teletype machines were damaged by the power loss, according to computing director Arthur Gloster. He estimated damage at \$400.

The computing center already was three days behind its work load and now must work through the weekend to catch up by Monday.

"It (the power shutdown) may have done some electrical damage, but that may not surface for two or three days," Gloster said.

The computing center suffered similar power outages last fall and summer, Gloster said.

The power shutdown also caused electrical circuits to overload and smoulder in the basement of Straub Hall. None of the computers in the adjacent psychology laboratory were affected, according to a maintenance engineer.

Power was shut down from about 1:14 p.m. to 1:35 p.m. while a crew repaired the severed power line, according to an EWEB representative. The worn connection probably was not detected in any of EWEB's periodic line checks because of the sometimes low power level on the line.

Physical plant generators provided emergency electricity while the power line was being repaired.

A Eugene Fire Department representative said engines responded to the one-alarm fire after receiving a call from the Eugene Police Department. Firefighters cleared the smoke from Gerlinger Annex in about an hour with large electric fans. No injuries were reported.

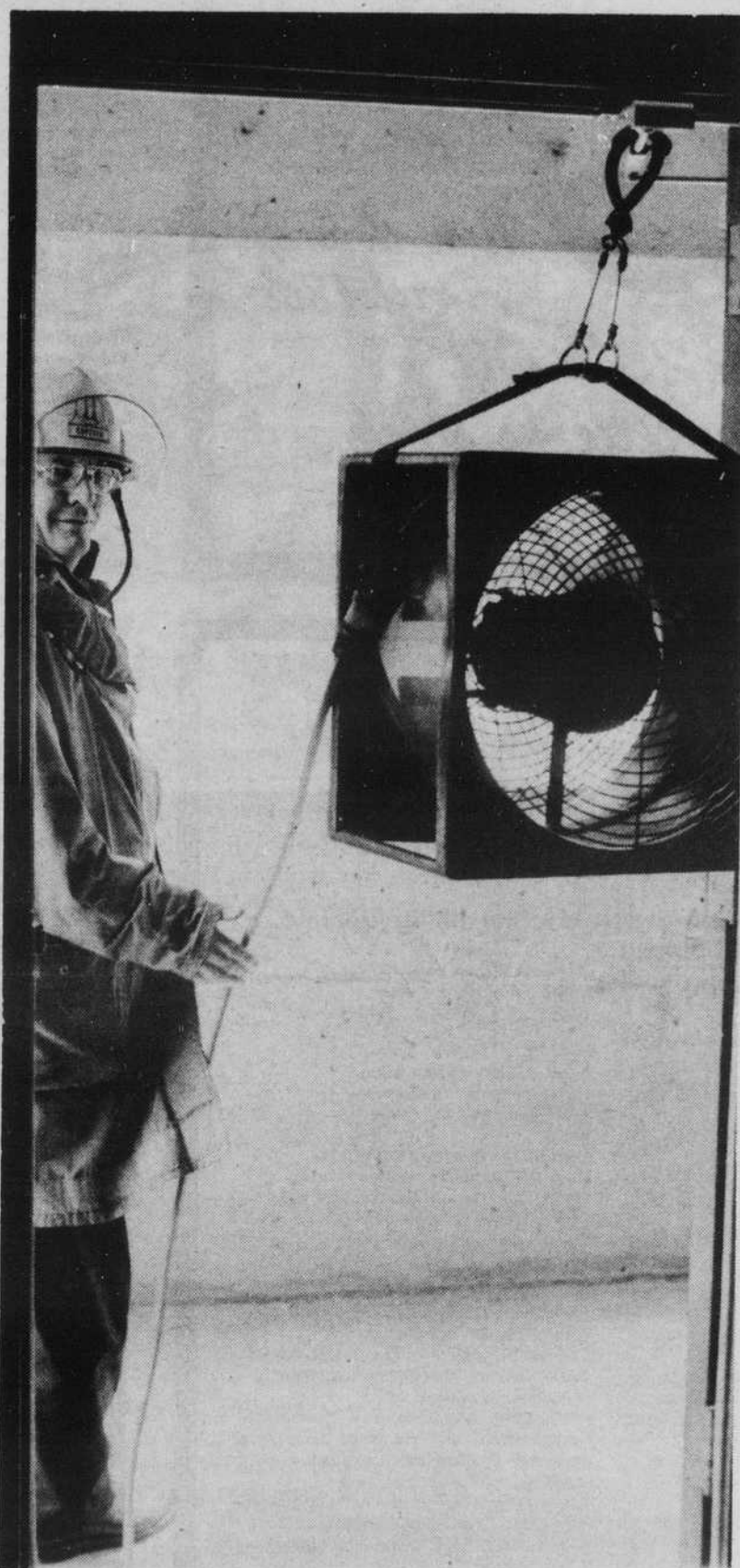


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

A helmeted Eugene firefighter uses a fan to clear smoke from Gerlinger Annex.

Spray bill fight looms

By LESLIE FARRIS
Of the Emerald

Rep. Jim Weaver, D-Ore., heard testimony from about 30 people Thursday on his proposed bill limiting the use of herbicides by federal forest agencies.

The bill, which Weaver introduced in Congress last week, would require the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to give preference to vegetation control methods not requiring the aerial spraying of herbicides whenever the costs of the alternatives are similar to or less than the costs of spraying.

Weaver said his bill would "eliminate the unnecessary use of herbicides on federal forest lands and create hundreds of new jobs in vegetation management."

"If it were up to me, I would halt all aerial spraying of herbicides because I have never been convinced of their effectiveness in promoting the growth of our Douglas Fir over the long term," he said. "There are alternatives to these sprays available that not only can get the job done but will employ hundreds of Oregonians who are now out of work."

In addition to denying people jobs, Weaver said the use of herbicides is harmful to human health.

Weaver listened to testimony about safety tests conducted by the Industrial Biotech Laboratories that were found to be invalid. The Environmental Protection Agency relied on these tests to register many of the herbicides used in Northwest forests. The EPA is reviewing registration of those chemicals, but none has been cancelled to date.

Robert Poss, representing the EPA at the hearing, said the agency administrator cancels chemicals when the risks outweigh the benefits.

"This goes to the heart of all our questioning about the validity of these tests," Weaver said. "If we find one major laboratory falsifying testing, it makes one wonder if the whole system is valid."

Dr. Joseph Morgan, a physician practicing for 15 years in Coos Bay, said he became concerned about the use of herbicides when he and his colleagues began noticing illnesses in many of their patients that were coincidental with the patients' exposure to herbicides. He said he's treated 50 to 60 such patients over the past five years for headaches, respiratory and gastrointestinal disturbances, flu-like symptoms, abnormal urinal bleeding and other illnesses.

But he said it's difficult to prove a direct cause-effect relationship between herbicides and illnesses because herbicides can't always readily be detected in body tissues, blood or urine.

"There's a tendency to dismiss anything as anecdotal that hasn't been proven scientifically," Morgan said.

"I believe the burden of proof should be on those who want to use the chemicals. It's morally unjustifiable to continue their use while waiting for evidence of their effects."

Weaver's bill would require the federal agencies to review each site scheduled for spray and certify that herbicide application would not cause short or long-term human health hazards. A provision would provide time for objectors to appeal spray plans before the herbicide is sprayed.

Michael Newton, a forest sciences professor at Oregon State University, said studies show a much higher medical risk among those clearing brush manually with power saws than those applying herbicides. And manually treated sites suffer greater erosion than chemically treated sites, he said.

Rich Koven of the Northwest Forest Worker Association, which comprises about 800 reforestation workers, said in a study of 2,838 working days, just nine workers clearing brush manually suffered minor injuries.

Wilkins wins landslide in primary

By PAUL TELLES
Of the Emerald

ASUO vice president Rich Wilkins won an overwhelming victory in this week's ASUO presidential election.

Wilkins garnered 1,622 votes, or 72.5 percent of the total. Second-runner Donovan Guy captured 288; third runner Bruce Mills polled 184 and Thomas Brannon took home 142 votes.

Wilkins said the main projects of his administration would be trying to make the athletic department more accountable to student government for its incidental fees allocations, trimming the EMU budget and pushing for a new system of childcare funding.

The final tally, released late Thursday night, makes next week's scheduled general elections unnecessary. Wilkins needed only to poll 50 percent of the vote to win on the

first ballot.

In the Incidental Fee Committee election, Karsten Rasmussen was top vote-getter with 1,396 votes. Pam Jordan finished second with 1,378. Cathi Bulone, Xavier Romano, Dave Gibson, Steven Baldwin and Kathleen "Katcha" Phinney also were elected to IFC seats, each polling more than 1,200 votes.

Former IFC chairer Alan Contreras finished eighth with 984 votes, and Ken Packman finished ninth with 731. Finishing behind them were Jon Bernstein and John Miche.

However, an election complaint filed by Contreras could cause a shake-up in the IFC results. Contreras has charged that Jordan wasn't a valid candidate after she withdrew her election application last week. Jordan later withdrew her withdrawal.

In other ASUO election business, four students were elected to the EMU

Board. Bob Needham finished first with 1,406 votes, followed closely by Chris Little with 1,405 votes. Michael Lehman and George Glass also won board seats polling 1,358 and 1,258 votes respectively.

Tom Pankey finished a third with 672 votes.

Six Student University Affairs Board representatives also were elected during the two-day balloting. Cheryl Steinhilf defeated David Kosse in the journalism race, polling 170 votes to Kosse's 42. Keith Johnson won the business and economics seat, polling 326 votes to Tamae Moriyasu's 261.

In uncontested SUAB races, Kevin Conover won the biology and chemistry seat; Pual Rudinsky won the undeclared major seat; Geoffrey Nichols won the computer science seat; and SUAB incumbent Susan Browning was elected to a second term in the music seat.