

City turns power off to prepare for Y2K

Some buildings will run on generators only to simulate 'bug' problems

By Amy Jennaro
Oregon Daily Emerald

Eugene citizens at Harris Hall and the Public Service and Lane County Courthouse buildings on Eighth and Oak Streets will receive an unpleasant surprise today.

At 4:30 p.m., the power will be turned off, and the buildings will be powered by their generators only.

The county is conducting a power outage simulation test in preparation for Y2K, the millennium bug that could cause computer problems. Power will be restored later this evening.

According to Lane County public information officer Mike Moskovitz, the county is dubious about any major disturbances resulting from Y2K, but feels the controversy surrounding it provides a good excuse to check its backup power sources.

"Based on reports about possible power outages, we didn't want to take any chances," he said.

Jack Miller, Lane County facility maintenance manager, said the plan for the simulation has been in effect for the past six months. Miller said the test is one of many that the county conducts annually to test its emergency power supply.

"It is important to exercise our other energy sources to make sure everyone knows how it works," he said.

But Miller added that the test is the biggest and most widespread one the county will have this year.

The simulation will leave the buildings dark except for selected areas that receive power from the generator. Among these are the sheriff's office dis-

patch center, computer information systems and a few basic building systems, Moskovitz said.

"Only the essential places are hooked up to the generator."

Moskovitz said a vital concern for the county is to make sure nobody gets injured while leaving the building when the power is turned off.

Moskovitz said he is confident the simulation won't be a threat to public safety.

"The building has a lot of windows, and we're not expecting it to be dark at the time of day we are doing this."

In addition, notices will be posted on all doors in the buildings, and staff members

will be on hand to help people exit, Moskovitz said.

County officials told the Eugene Water and Electric Board last week about its decision to conduct the simulation, said John Mitchell, EWEB's communications coordinator.

Mitchell said Y2K preparedness hasn't been an issue among many building owners in the county.

"This is the only test I've heard of in which a building is testing its generators with Y2K as the impetus," he said.

However, Moskovitz said possible Y2K problems aren't the only reason for the simulation; there also have been minor problems with the generators themselves.

One particular concern is the fumes created when the generator is used.

"We want to make sure all the fumes exit the building," he said.

But Miller said there was a bigger reason why the simulation was necessary.

"We feel we have a responsibility to be prepared in case of an emergency," he said.

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Jack Miller
Lane County facility
maintenance manager

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