

Power generators kicked into high gear

■ When freezing weather hit Eugene over break, the University turned to other sources for electricity

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

During winter vacation the University spread the holiday spirit by offering its help to the entire Eugene community as below-freezing temperatures drove up the demand for power and threatened to exhaust the community's energy source. It may not be the last time the campus has to offer its services.

At the request of the Eugene Water and Electric Board, the University used both of its electrical generators to fill all of the campus's electricity needs Dec. 11 and 12, so EWEB could better meet the community's energy demand during

the ongoing Northwest energy crisis.

The crisis, which is being caused by an unusually dry winter, higher power prices and not enough new power generation sources, led EWEB to ask its commercial customers to curtail their use of power or generate their own electricity.

"The demand for electricity has grown due to population increases, but the supply has not kept up with the demand," EWEB Public Affairs Manager Marty Douglass said.

In early December there were forecasts for zero degree temperatures, he said, adding the situation could have meant not enough energy for all of Eugene.

Although the temperatures did not drop as expected, Douglass said the University, along with other commercial customers, may be

asked to generate their own power again in future months if severe weather becomes a reality.

"We're on alert throughout the winter since freezing temperatures still pose a threat," Douglass said.

George Hecht, University Cam-

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Marty Douglass
EWEB Public
Affairs Manager

pus Operations director, said the University has two generators, and each can generate as much as three megawatts of power per hour, but

under normal conditions only about half of the generators' power is used.

"Buying electricity is generally cheaper, so we use the generators only when we need to," he said.

One generator is a back pressure generator that is used to generate steam for heating the campus and the other is a condensation generator that is not used as often, he said.

Although the University did not lose any money from using the generators this time, Hecht thinks the price of campus power is going to increase.

"It's possible this energy shortage could be a long term problem, and the era of cheap energy will be gone," he said.

Douglass also said University electricity rates are expected to increase soon.

"I think we'll see customers paying more than they ever have before," he said, adding that the increased rates will apply to all customers.

University Energy Specialist Amy Lake said the University will receive a credit from EWEB for the amount of electricity used from the generators.

She added that utility rates, which are the prices of heating campus auxiliary buildings such as the EMU and student housing, will also be unaffected by higher costs from the generator usage because these buildings are heated by steam and not electricity.

"I think we'll find out we benefited from the generator use overall," she said. "Once we factor in the fuel that will be made up with the credit I think we'll come out on top."

Increase

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energy costs. Like Weyerhaeuser, Sacred Heart creates its own energy by using steam, something that has helped keep costs down in the past.

Jim Weston, director of facilities management for Sacred Heart, said costs will go up due to the price increase, but patients won't be paying more for their healthcare.

"We'll find a way to handle the increase without compromising the quality of our care," Weston

said.

Sacred Heart has completed three years of a five-year agreement with EWEB to conserve energy. EWEB has put \$1 million into the \$1.5 million plan that has given the medical center energy efficient lights, more sophisticated motors on the equipment and water "chillers" that will all help conserve energy.

Despite all the conservation efforts, Sacred Heart will still need to find ways to cut back costs without making patients uncomfortable, Weston said.

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“Patients can be assured that we won't be turning the lights off on them or shutting off their heat.”

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Sacred Heart

won't be turning the lights off on

them or shutting off their heat," Weston said. "We're going to have to look at where we can trim costs."

Smaller businesses, such as the University of Oregon Bookstore, will also be affected by the price hike. However, the bookstore isn't anticipating raising its prices as a result of the energy crisis.

"We're still a big enough business that we can afford an increase like this," General Manager Jim Williams said.

The bookstore is already

equipped with energy-saving light fixtures, and has been involved in EWEB's energy-saving programs.

"Everything we do, we try to do in a conserving way," Williams said.

Williams also said that if energy prices continue to rise into next year, the bookstore may incur additional expenses, but none large enough to affect product prices.

"Each business is going to need to do an internal assessment of its power need," Connolly said.

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Chavez

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abusive relationship, who fled Guatemala at a time of turmoil in that country, who landed in the United States knowing no one and having no friends and having no place to live and no way to support herself."

Chavez said a friend introduced them and asked her to take Mercado in.

"I did that even at the time knowing that there was some risk to me," she said, adding: "If I was asked by a friend to do that again, I would do it in an instant, without hesitation."

Union leaders and some Democrats were already gearing up to try and defeat Chavez's nomination before the immigrant story broke, concerned about her strongly conservative positions and background, including opposition to affirmative action and raising the minimum wage. On Tuesday, the AFL-CIO released a 17-page analysis of her record and promised to try and stop her confirmation in the Senate.

In light of the new controversy, Senate Democrats also were set to charge hypocrisy, noting that Chavez had criticized Zoe Baird, who was forced to withdraw in 1993 as President Clinton's nominee for attorney general. Baird had had illegal aliens as household help and did not pay Social Security taxes on their wages, and Chavez said that the illegal alien aspect of that case was most troubling.

On Tuesday, Chavez said that the Baird case was different from her own, though she said that Baird, too, was treated unfairly.

With less than two weeks before Bush takes the White House, there was no immediate word of a new nominee.

Bush said in a statement that he was disappointed Chavez would not be in his Cabinet. "Linda is a good person with a great deal of

compassion," he said.

Earlier prospects for the Labor Department included Missouri Rep. Jim Talent, a defeated nominee for governor of Missouri; Rep. Jennifer Dunn of Washington and Rich Bond, a former chairman of the Republican National Committee. One Bush adviser said Tuesday the prospects also included Elaine L. Chao, former deputy transportation secretary and the wife of Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy, the top Democrat on the committee that handles this nomination, said Chavez's withdrawal offered Bush a second chance.

"If there's a silver lining to the events of recent days it's the opportunity now to name a labor secretary in the distinguished tradition of recent Republican presidents," he said in a statement.

Bush initially stuck with Chavez, but by Tuesday, the president-elect's high command got word to the nominee that she should withdraw. It was a quick step to cut political losses and avoid the distraction of a Cabinet dispute with an evenly divided Senate.

With his nominees for attorney general, John Ashcroft, and for secretary of the interior, Gale Norton, also drawing sharp opposition over their views, a Chavez uproar could have been a significant problem.

Chavez, 53, headed the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights during the Reagan administration. She has since been a conservative columnist and television commentator, and founded the Center for Equal Opportunity, a conservative think tank in Washington.



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