

Union-built gas-fired power plant goes online in Oregon

Officials say Port Westward was a model for efficiency, low emissions and safe construction

CLATSKANIE, Ore. — Portland General Electric's new union-built natural gas-fired power plant in Columbia County is now online and able to generate enough energy to serve about 300,000 homes.

Company officials, community leaders, construction contractors and union officials celebrated the completion of the \$285 million Port Westward Generating Plant July 19 with a dedication ceremony.

Port Westward is PGE's first plant to be brought online in more than 10 years. Powered by a new breed of Mitsubishi G1-class combustion turbine, the combined-cycle, natural gas-fired plant is one of the most efficient generators of its type in the United States, PGE officials said.

Port Westward also has low levels of emissions for nitrous oxide and carbon monoxide. Levels measured at the plant since it began operation are below the strict levels permitted by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

At the dedication ceremony, PGE thanked the construction union workforce for its efficiency. The all-union workforce worked under a national project labor agreement between general contractor Black & Veatch and the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council.

Richard King, vice president of construction and labor relations for Black & Veatch, said the project was completed with an overall recordable injury rate of 0.68 and a days-away-from-work rate of 0.00. This compares with the industry average recordable injury rate of 6.3 and a days-away-from-work rate of 2.4.

At the dedication ceremony, King singled out International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48 and EC Company for outstanding craftsman

ship and productivity; and John Mohlis and Wally Mehrens for outstanding leadership and labor management cooperation. Mohlis is executive secretary-treasurer of the building trades council; Mehrens retired from that post in December 2005.

PGE broke ground on the Port Westward Generating Plant on Oct. 7, 2005.

"We're proud to have worked with PGE and with several key partners on this very important project and to have

delivered it with industry-best safety practices," King said.

Mohlis pointed to the high levels of cooperation and camaraderie among the tradesmen and women, contractors and PGE.

"From a union perspective, this was one of the most successful projects we've been a part of," said Mohlis, who pointed to the workforce for the "skill, productivity and commitment to safety and quality" that they brought to the project.

At the height of construction last summer, more than 400 workers were on site. "It was something like a million man-hours," Mohlis said.

The Port Westward project has been a shot in the arm to economic development in Columbia County, said Rita Bernhard, chair of the Columbia County Commission.

"PGE's operations at Port Westward, including its Beaver Plant, have been a catalyst in attracting more economic development to our region,"

Bernhard said.

Eighteen full-time employees will operate the new facility. Thirteen are members of Electrical Workers Local 125.

With a generating capacity of 400 megawatts, Port Westward produces enough electricity to power the homes of more than 300,000 PGE customers.

The new plant will reduce PGE's dependence on wholesale market electricity purchases, said Peggy Fowler, PGE's CEO and president.

Construction unions seek level playing field on health care

Portland City Council will discuss a union-backed proposal Wednesday, Aug. 8, that would level the playing field for union contractors competing for city-funded construction projects. Contractors that don't provide full family health care for their employees would have to pay an equivalent hourly amount into a city fund. The fund would go to the Multnomah County Health Department to provide health care access to the uninsured construction workers, and could attract federal matching funds.

Right now, union contractors are at an economic disadvantage bidding for small city jobs, because they're competing with contractors that pay little or nothing for health care. Last year, an informal union-conducted survey of employees of construction contractors doing business with the city found that only about a third had employer-provided individual health coverage, and less than 5 percent had employer-provided coverage that included their fami-

lies. Union contractors, on the other hand, provide full family health coverage to their employees, by making hourly contributions to joint labor-management health trusts.

The proposed ordinance, termed "pay or play," would turn the tables — contractors wouldn't get a competitive advantage by leaving workers to pay for their own family health care.

It got its start over a year ago, when at a Northwest Oregon Labor Council breakfast, City Commission Sam Adams criticized Wal-Mart for not providing adequate insurance to employees. Cherry Harris, stationary coordinator for Operating Engineers Local 701, figured that meant Adams would be on board to use city purchasing power to push contractors to provide health care. Harris and leaders of other building trades unions — Laborers, Carpenters, Iron Workers, and Electrical Workers — began meeting with staff in Adams' office to come up with

a way to do that.

Originally, the group wanted to guarantee health coverage for all workers who worked on City projects — by requiring contractors to "pre-qualify" by showing they provided health care. But City attorneys said that would violate provisions of a state law that sets uniform standards for what can be considered in public contracting. So they came up with the "pay or play" approach.

"By going down this road, the city would be saying we want to do business with companies that are responsible," Harris said.

As of press time, the hearing on the proposal was scheduled for 3 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 8 at City Hall, but union leaders were pushing to have it changed to that evening to allow more union members to attend. The hearing would be the first step — followed by several public meetings on the subject, and then a vote on a city ordinance.



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IBEW & United Workers Federal Credit Union would like to congratulate Laurie on her 30 years of service! Laurie has held many positions within the Credit Union starting as a Member Service Representative, and currently is one of our Loan Officers.

Help us honor Laurie by visiting the Credit Union on August 6th and enjoy a piece of cake and a cup of punch and take the opportunity to wish her well.



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