

Photo by Justin Phillips

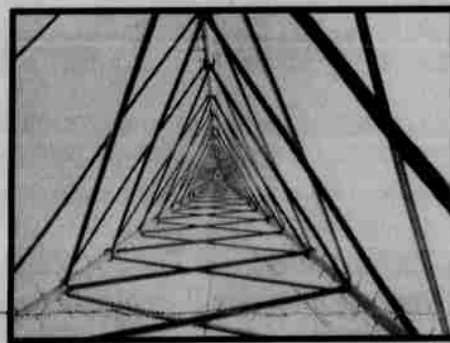
The new 200 foot tower is now completed and warning lights have been installed.



Photo by Brent Merrill

WEST VALLEY VIEW — This view of the West Valley is looking north from the Tribe's new communications tower. The tower is located directly north of the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino and Highway 18.

A View from the Tribe's New



TOWER OF POWER

By Justin Phillips

It could save your life one day.
If you are a criminal, it could destroy your life.

"A few precious minutes could mean the difference between life and death."

— Polk County Sheriff Bob Wolfe

The Tribe's new communication's tower is now finished. The blinking light at top of the 200-foot tall tower confirms it. This light has a long road ahead. It just may blink forever.

The primary purpose of this tower is to enhance communications for emergency services in the Grand Ronde, Willamina and Sheridan areas.

The final section was added to the tower on February 8. Jodie Kraemer, the Tribe's Telecommunications Specialist who was behind the project, stood in the falling rain and snow and watched over as the last piece was constructed.

The first people to use this tower will be Polk County Emergency Services, Yamhill County Emergency Services, Oregon State Police and Life Flight. Negotiations for cell phone carriers and paging services are also in process.

"It's been a lot of hard work and team effort," said Kraemer. "We have had nothing but positive response from people. It's going to be a real asset to the community in the long term. It will really improve the area's communications.

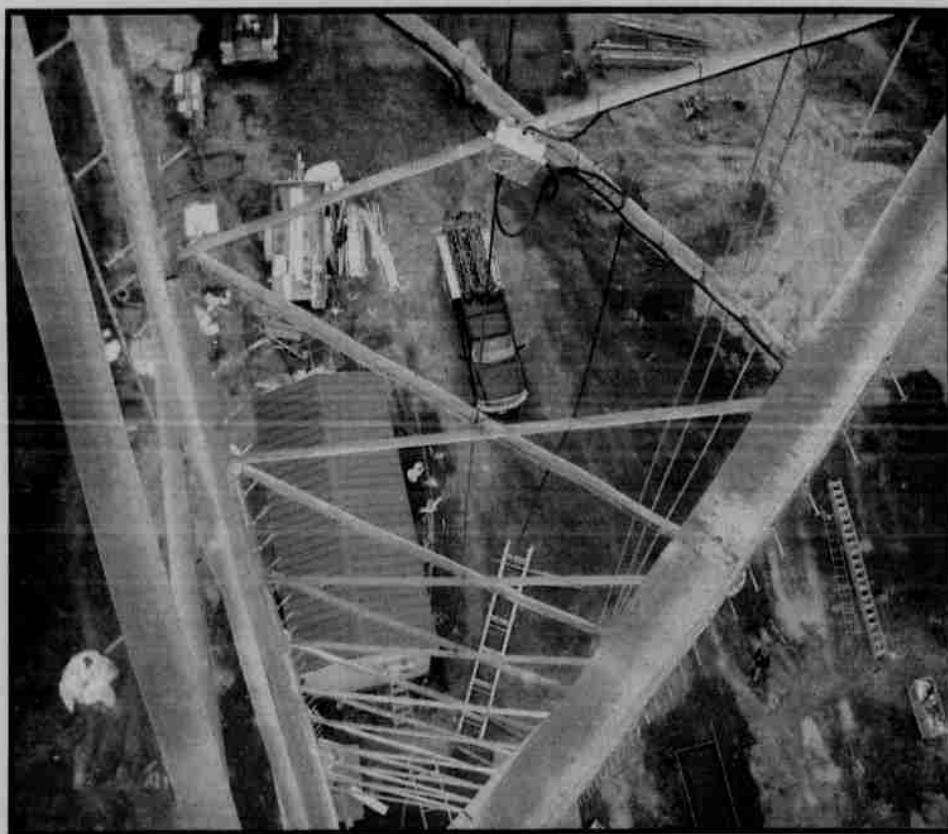
"It feels good to be part of something that is positive for the community that will make a difference for the better," said Kraemer. "Overall the project went very well. It took some time, but by taking more time, we got every-

thing done right the first time."

"This will help out tremendously on our radio communication in that area", said Polk County Sheriff Bob Wolfe. "We, right now, have several dead spots in that area and there are times when the officer is on their portable radio and they can't contact the dispatch center because their radio is static, so they have to get back into their car to make a radio transmission.

"It's basically going to greatly enhance our communication and officer safety so that they don't miss radio transmissions," said Wolfe. "There are times when an officer can get injured or shot at and they only have one brief chance to get on the radio and if that transmission comes in just as static transmission, often times in the Grand Ronde area we don't know if it's just interference or someone trying to make a contact. That little bit of squelch might go on unanswered. A few precious minutes could mean the difference between life and death.

"The efforts of the Tribe and Jodie are tremendous. Hats off to her, she has done a tremendous job," said Wolfe. "To have us involved in the process and extend the opportunity to utilize some space on the tower is great. We are going to do everything we can to make the best use of the space."



FINISHING TOUCHES — The Tribe's new communications tower is nearly complete. Some finishing touches are being added to the tower and to the building on site that will house tower equipment.



Photos by Brent Merrill

LOOK OUT BELOW — Climbers, like Merricom Communication's "Cable," use a variety of safety gear when climbing the 200-foot tall tower. Safety harnesses complete with locking clamps are used to form a protective body suit that allows climbers to secure themselves to the tower during their ascent.