

## Looming power shortage in Pacific Northwest may force PGE to operate Harborton gas-fired generating plant

The Pacific Northwest power is deteriorating daily, and now requires operation of Portland General Electric Co.'s Harborton generating facility, Public Utility Commissioner John Lobdell said recently.

Lobdell said PGE's power outlook is critical, but the region itself faces a shortage of at least five percent. Other utilities have indicated they may be willing to assist PGE despite this shortfall, but only if the Harborton facility is in operation, Lobdell said.

The Portland City Council has approved operation of the gas-fired Harborton generating plant under several conditions, one of which is that Lobdell declare the necessity. Lobdell made the necessary declaration in a letter to Bill Young, director of the Department of Environmental Quality. His letter recommended that a permit for Harborton's operation be granted by the DEQ.

In the letter, Lobdell said "A threatening situation has resulted primarily from three events—a shortage of stored water in the Columbia River system, the unforeseen delay in resumption of electricity production at PGE's Trojan nuclear plant at Rainier, and the very real possibility that natural gas to operate Harborton will not be available in adequate quantity through the critical period."

The projected regional deficit—barring heavy rainfall soon—is equal to the average annual production of Trojan, and the hydroelectric system is falling farther behind at the rate of an estimated 200 million kilowatt hours every week, Lobdell said.

Without resumption of power production from Trojan and without regional assistance, PGE may have a shortfall in January of 50 percent of its needs to meet the power load and its obligations to other producers, Lobdell said.

"Most of this shortfall could be met with a solid conservation effort, and with the cooperation of other utilities and the Bonneville Power Administration, even though the region itself might need to slightly curtail use," Lobdell said.

"I think Oregonians will respond to the call for conservation," Lobdell said. "But I have been advised by representatives of other utilities, both public and investor-owned, that regional cooperation will not be forthcoming unless PGE's Harborton generating facility is operated to contribute to the power supply."

The regional situation would be eased by reactivation of the Trojan nuclear plant. It was expected to be in operation by at least Dec. 15. Last week, however, action by the federal Atomic Safety and Licensing Board delayed issuance of an operating permit until at least Dec. 24.

Lobdell noted that the Portland City Council required that Harborton be operated only with natural gas, and gas may not be in adequate supply later in the month. Northwest Natural Gas Co. officials have advised Lobdell that the company probably could supply Harborton through Dec. 15, and would be able to serve the facility after that time only if the weather is not unseasonably cold. Thus operation of Harborton now, while the gas supply is more reliable, is warranted, Lobdell said.

Lobdell said he recognizes the burden that use of Harborton will place on the Portland airshed, "but there is no alternative. Heavy rainfall, mild weather, and a large mountain snowpack might overcome this winter's electricity shortfall. But we cannot count on any of this, and steps

must be taken now to avoid the possibility of involuntary sacrifice by the people of Oregon in the near future. Should PGE be required to engage in drastic mandatory curtailment, the jobs of several thousand wage earners would be temporarily lost to

them. The health and safety of several hundred thousand Oregonians would be endangered."

Lobdell said he has informed Governor Aljeh of his decision to request a permit for Harborton.

Lobdell urged that all Ore-

gonians conserve energy, and not just those customers of PGE because the electricity problem is regional. And he said natural gas users should conserve as well to help make gas available for power production.

He also joined the Bonne-

ville Power Administration in suggesting that electricity for Christmas lighting be used wisely, not wastefully. But he said he would give no consideration at this time to requesting that Oregonians forego Christmas lighting altogether.

## Grain carriers face inspection

Beginning January 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will require all official grain sample lot inspection certificates for outbound shipments to tell whether the carrier's stowage space was examined before loading.

According to Dwain Watson, regional director of the de-

partment's Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) in Seattle, the certificate statement is intended to indicate to the receiver whether or not the carrier was examined for suitability for shipping grain.

Watson said it should also encourage the examination of stowage before loading, re-

ducing the problem of contaminated carriers.

The new certificate statement does not change the requirement for domestic stowage examinations. A stowage examination may be requested as a separate service on any carrier, but is required only when grain is to be sampled during loading.



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