

Boardman coal plant begins layoffs in preparation for closing

In preparation for its permanent closing this year, the Boardman coal fired plant will soon began laying off employees, Morrow County Commission Chair Melissa Lindsay was recently informed.

Closure of the plant will end a 40-year run of producing power at the coal fire electrical generating plant, which provided power for Portland General

Electric customers. In the first round of layoffs the company says 22 employees will lose their jobs on November 5. About 70 people are currently employed at the plant, which began operation in July of 1980 (see related story from Gazette Times archives).

Below is a list of the terminated employees provided in a letter to the county commissioners:

List of affected job titles and classifications	
Job Titles	Number of affected employees in each job title
Chemistry Technician	1
Control Operator Fossil	2
Fuel Equipment Operator All Qualified	1
Manager Plant Maintenance	1
Office Administrator	1
Operator Fuel Equipment In Charge	1
Plant Equipment Operator	1
Plant Serviceman AA	1
Senior Instrument & Control Technician	2
Senior Planning & Scheduling Specialist	2
Staff Generation Engineering Support Specialist	1
Storeroom Toolroom	1
Supervisor Generation Engineering Support	1
Supervisor Inventory Control	1
Supervisor Plant Maintenance	1
Supervisor Plant Operations	4

Reprinted from the June 26, 1980 Heppner Gazette-Times Boardman Coal Plant to Generate in August

Editor's note: The following article appeared in the June 26, 1980 issue of the Heppner Gazette-Times and was written after the plant was just built and before the plant started operations.

By Steve Powell
Portland General Electric Coal Fire Plant near Boardman is scheduled to begin generating power sometime in August.

Two million tons of coal has been piled in the storage yard at Carty for the past six months. The coal has been packed tightly to reduce the chance of spontaneous combustion. Coal trains pass through a thaw shed since the trains have to travel across the Rocky Mountains. At the end of the thaw shed is a rotary car dumper which rotates the railroad cars and dumps the coal into hoppers. A rotary coupling enables the cars to be dumped without disconnecting the car from the rest of the train. Cars are dumped every 105 seconds. Conveyor belts take the coal to the main pile, an emergency dump pile or directly to the power plant. A rotating scoop wheel picks up the coal and dumps it into the conveyor belt that leads to the plant. Coal in railroad cars arrives about the size of tennis balls so before the coal can be burned in the plant's boiler, crushers reduce the coal to about 1-1/2 inches in size and then a pulverizer smashes it to a fine powder.

A 10,000-ton coal train arrives every 2-1/2 days with a little more than one day's fuel. A magnet pulls out any tools that may be in the coal which would damage the crushers.

A fine powder is blown into the combustion chamber where temperatures reach 3,000 degrees. The boiler walls contain steel tubing in which distilled water is circulated and heated to form high pressure steam. Distilled water is used because impurities can cause severe corrosion in the boiler turbines.

Steam is pumped from the boiler to the high-pressure turbine generator which produces electricity.

Concern for the environment has played a vital role in the operation of the Boardman coal plant.

PGE has been monitoring the area since the early 1970s and 10s of millions of dollars have been spent on environmental control equipment.

The Boardman plant will use sub-bituminous (very soft) low sulfur coal from the Amax Coal Company mines in Gillette, WY. Emissions from the plant will be released from a 656-foot-high chimney.

Modern air quality control equipment will control the emissions. When the coal is burned 15 to 20 percent of the ash falls to the floor and is called bottom ash. About 80 to 85 percent of the ash leaves a furnace with the gases and is called fly ash.

A 27.5 million electricity static precipitator will collect 99.5 percent of the fly ash. A high voltage electric field collects the fly ash particles and when the plates are vibrated, the ash falls to the bottom into a hopper. About 40,000 pounds of fly ash will be produced every hour.

To further cut down pollution, the fly ash, when removed from the plant site, is taken in covered trucks and then buried. Coal on the plant site is washed in liquid sprays to suppress the dust.

The Boardman plant, built by Bechtel Power Corporation, costs more than \$525 million. PGE owns 80 percent, with Idaho Power Company and Pacific Northwest Generating Company each owning 10 percent. About 125 employees will work there permanently once the construction is completed. The plant will produce 530,000 kilowatts.

Last week Heppner Gazette times news editor Steve Powell flew on a private PGE airplane to Gillette WY, to visit the Amax coal mines in wealthy Campbell County, which has 17 coal companies operating in it.

Gillette was a small town of about 2,500 until 1956 when it increased to 7,000 when oil was discovered. There is still oil in the area but coal companies began to surge into the area in 1970. There are now about 18,000 people in Gillette with a projection of 38,000 by 1990, said Don Warfield, Amax media representative.

Amax Coal Company is the third largest coal producer in the United States. It has two mines in Campbell County. The Bel Air mine is 18 miles North of Gillette and is the largest producing coal mine in the US. It began production in 1973. The Amax Eagle



The PGE coal plant in Boardman prepares for closing.

A combination of lawsuits from environmental groups and political pressure has caused the plant to close prior to the end of its economic life. Alternative fuels such as biomass were looked at as an alternative to coal to keep the plant open, but none

were deemed viable for the facility.

The 550-megawatt plant was the only coal burning electrical generating facility in Oregon. The plant is one of PGE's largest power stations, producing 15 percent of the utility's electricity in 2009.

Butte mine, eight miles North of Gillette, is another mine PGE coal will come from.

Amax Coal Company owns 11 coal mines and all but one is a surface coal mine. Its largest workforce is at its only underground mine in Illinois. Most of the coal, about 99 percent sold by Amex, is purchased by electric utilities.

In the open pit method topsoil is removed by giant electric powered shovels. Overburden (older soil) is then removed. Overburden depth is anywhere from a few feet to a few 100 feet, with an average of about 90.

When the coal seam is reached, the shovels put the coal in 120-ton capacity diesel electric haul trucks would take the coal to a hopper. Crushers 80 feet below the hopper reduce the size of the coal which is then carried up a huge conveyor belt to four 200-foot high silos. The silos can hold 12,000 tons each.

Railroad trains travel underneath the silos and the coal is deposited into the empty cars. The coal is not treated in any way because it is so clean, Warfield said.

Coal is loaded continually for one hour and 15 minutes until the trains are loaded. The trains travel through the silo on cruise control at one mile per hour. 100 tons of coal can be loaded in 30 to 40 seconds. The trains are 105 cars long with each carrying 100 tons.

The Loop to hold work session

The Loop Morrow County Special Transportation will be holding a STIF Advisory Committee work session on October 6 at 10:30 a.m., at the Bartholomew Building lower conference room, 110 N. Court St. in Heppner.

In response to the current health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, county facilities have limited seating capacity and meetings are being held electronically to provide participation other than in-person. The work session will be available

The Bel Air mine produces almost 15,000,000 tons of coal a year with a coal seam of an average of 75 feet. It has 426 employees and pays more than 13 million in state and local taxes. Belle Air loads four to five trains a day.

The Eagle Butte mine produced almost four million tons of coal last year with an average coal seam of 130 feet. It has 199 employees and paid almost 4 million in state and local taxes. It loads one or two trains a day.

Women constitute about 16 percent of the total workforce of both mines. Three shifts run every day.

The coal seam the two mines are working on is five miles wide, 70 feet thick on the average and 80 miles long. Approximately 12 percent of all US coal is in Wyoming and five percent of all US coal is in Campbell County.

Amax sells the coal for \$7 a ton, said Gary Brown, assistant general manager of the western division of the Amax coal company. Amax makes a 50 percent profit on each ton. By the time the trains get to the Boardman plant it costs PGE \$22 a ton with the difference going to the railroad companies for transportation costs.

In next week's Gazette times Steve Powell will continue to discuss his trip to Wyoming and will tell about the process of reclamation at the coal mines.

for viewing via Morrow County Zoom Meeting. To schedule a Zoom Meeting invitation please provide your name, phone number and email address with The Loop Morrow County Special Transportation via phone message at 541-676-5667, or kimes@co.morrow.or.us

The agenda will include roll call, introductions, STIF administrative rules proposals for STIF Discretionary Grant application and other business as needed for the good of the order.

From the Gazette-Times archives Reprinted from the July 24, 1980 Gazette-Times

Electricity begins to flow from Boardman

By David Sykes
Electricity from Portland General Electric company's new Boardman Coal Fire plant began flowing to the utilities' customers for the first time at 9:40 a.m. July 12.

Completed on schedule and within budget, the \$525 million dollar plant took some 4-1/2 years to build and, according to PGE, can produce 530,000 kilowatts of electrical power. This is enough electricity for 240,000 homes.

Operators of the plant fired its giant boiler on oil for test purposes during the next week. It produced about five percent of its full power output during the test.

Following the initial test on oil, coal will be fed into the boiler for the first time and testing will continue until Boardman reaches its full power output. Boardman will burn 315 tons of coal per hour when operating at full power.

PGE president Robert H. Short praised all those associated with the design and construction of the Boardman plant. "To bring a project of this magnitude to completion right on target is truly commendable," Short said.

The addition of Boardman to the PGE system will ease the power crunch experience during the last few years and allow us to meet our customers growing needs into the mid-1980s, Short said.

"This however does not lessen the importance of increasing energy conservation cogeneration and the development of renewable resources," he said. "It will take strong emphasis on these programs as well as new generating plants to meet the Pacific Northwest's needs in the years ahead."

Boardman project general manager Tom Kingston also praised all of the contractors and workers involved with the project. At peak there were some 1,400 construction workers on the job at Boardman. It took 7.1 million manhours to build the project.

In addition, Kingston thanked the local communities for their tremendous support for Boardman and cooperative spirit in minimizing any social economic impacts from the project.

Kingston was in charge of the plant's construction until being named to head its operation in January

Bible study group scheduled

Joe Lindsay of Lexington will be leading a Bible Study group every Monday, beginning September 28, at St. Patrick's Parish Hall, from 5:15 to 5:50 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

1980.
A site certificate to build the Boardman project was granted by the Nuclear Thermo Energy Council and signed by former Governor Robert Straub in 1975. Construction began in February 1976.

First structures completed were the dams and dike forming the 1400 surface acre Carty Reservoir. It provides cooling water for the plant as well as 10,000-acre feet of water storage for irrigation.

The Boeing Agri-industry company supplies the water for the Carty Reservoir through an 18-mile-long, 60-inch diameter pipeline from the Willow Creek arm of the Columbia River. In exchange it uses the reservoir's water storage capacity.

Also dominating the plant site is the project's 656-foot-tall chimney. It is made of reinforced concrete with a freestanding steel liner and took 15 months to build. Next to the chimney is a \$27,000,000 electrostatic precipitator designed to remove more than 99.5 percent of the fly ash results from burning the coal.

PGE says it is using extremely low sulfur coal at Boardman for additional environmental protection. The coal contains less than 0.5 percent sulfur.

Call for the Boardman project comes from AMAX coal companies Bel Air and Eagle Butte mines near Gillette, WY. PGE has a 20-year contract with AMAX for 1.2 million tons of coal per year.

Unit trains make the 1200-mile trek from the mine to the plant 10 times each month. Each hundred car train is more than a mile in length and holds some 10,000 tons of coal.

Shipments of coal began arriving in Boardman in January 1980. There are more than 690,000 tons of coal now stockpiled at the plant, says PGE.

Electricity from the Boardman plant will cost about five cents a kwh to produce. This compares with about two cents a kwh for electricity from the Trojan nuclear plant and seven to 10 cents a kwh for power from oil-fired plants.

PGE said it had originally planned to build nuclear plants rather than the Boardman project. Delays and approval however led to the decision to build the coal fired project.

Those who wish may attend a 6 p.m. Mass afterwards. The Liturgical for the following week will be discussed and Social Distancing guidelines will be followed.



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