

Evolving technology changes utility work

Electric cooperatives now rely more on digital information than on binders full of maps

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

When Mitch Colvin started working as a lineman for Umatilla Electric Cooperative six years ago, he spent a lot of time looking at maps.

The maps, which crews hauled around in their pickup trucks, spanned two black binders, each several inches thick and much wider than a standard binder. When linemen needed to locate a specific utility pole or other infrastructure, they had to look up the right paper map out of thousands, then search the tiny numbers on the page, looking for the right one.

Now, everything is digitized and everyone has their own iPad.

"It speeds up the process a ton," Colvin said. "You just type it in and it pulls it right up."

The iPad not only pulls up the information that was previously contained in the maps, but also a treasure trove of other details, from the size of a transformer to the name and phone number of a customer associated with a meter. Linemen can also add information, such as photos, from on-site.

The Geographic Information System used to help crews pinpoint infrastructure in the field is overseen by Adelaide Zumwalt, GIS administrator for UEC.

At the cooperative's Hermiston office, she toggled through different maps, showing an interconnected web of information.

On one map, little tree icons dotted UEC's service area. The pins marked places where UEC employees used their iPads to note where they noticed a tree needs trimmed back from a power line, instantly making that information available to those in charge of



Nick Hardie uses a rope to raise equipment up to fellow lineman Matt Ellis, while working on a utility pole in Hermiston on Wednesday, April 7, 2021.



Matt Ellis, a lineman with Umatilla Electric Cooperative, positions equipment atop a utility pole in Hermiston on Wednesday, April 7, 2021.



A control room at Umatilla Electric Cooperative in Hermiston oversees operations and systems across the cooperative's coverage area.

vegetation management.

On another map, a grid of red squares marked where crews need to complete routine inspections on poles. When they complete the inspection, they can mark it off the list, turning that area green on the map, and note any maintenance that needs done.

Zumwalt said just a few years ago, that type of information was often on physical paper, making it much more difficult to

keep track of, update and share between departments and crews. It was also difficult to spot trends. Now, with the click of a button, an employee can sort maps of outage histories by cause, location, time or other factors.

"Before, there was no way to visualize this or analyze the data without a ton of work," Zumwalt said.

Down the hall, System Operator Kathryn Ken-

nington is stationed in a control room full of monitors. The amount of information displayed on the screens and the ease of monitoring it has changed significantly over the years of her career in energy, she said.

"We have a lot more information at our fingertips," she said.

After UEC installed smart meters, for example, staff at the office gained the ability to "ping" a meter

and check if it is on, without needing to send someone to physically look to see if a neighborhood has lights on.

Kennington said she has also seen how the GIS mapping has helped crews in the field respond more quickly to outages.

"The electronic mapping is definitely an improvement for newer linemen who don't know the system as well," she said.

Colvin agrees. On Wednesday, April 7, he was out on Southeast Ninth Street in Hermiston, overseeing work to extend power to a small subdivision being built along the

road. In addition to making it easier to navigate, he said the iPads also help with simple things, like punching in work hours electronically instead of filling out and turning in a handwritten time sheet every day.

He said new power tools and equipment purchased in recent years have also saved linemen time. That's time they need, he said. Hermiston, Boardman and other parts of Umatilla Electric Cooperative's service area have been growing rapidly. That brings crews out to projects like the one Colvin was at on April 7.

"There are a lot of new subdivisions," he said.

Career Connect Virtual College and Job Fair planned for April 28

Employers, colleges, trade unions and others will offer information at the event

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

High school students, college students and other job seekers are invited to connect with potential employers at the Career Connect Virtual College and Job Fair on Wednesday, April 28.

The event — sponsored by the Port of Morrow, Boardman Chamber of Commerce, Oregon State University and 4-H — will be hosted in an interactive online format, with a session for high school students from 8:30-10:50 a.m. and a session for all other job seekers from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Information for the event can be found online at careerconnect2021.com, and no preregistration is necessary.

Currently, the website contains general information for job seekers in the area, including workforce training programs and housing assistance. On April 28, it will transform into a portal for the college and job fair. It is recommended that participants download the video conferencing program Zoom ahead of time so they are ready to participate when the link goes live.

"We've tried to make it as accessible as possible," Kalie Davis, director of workforce development for



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

The Port of Morrow is one of the primary sponsors of the Career Connect Virtual College and Job Fair scheduled for Wednesday, April 28, 2021.

the Port of Morrow, said. Davis said during the

virtual job fair, people will be able to hear from

employers, colleges, trade unions and more about employment, education, certification and training opportunities. Listeners can ask questions by video, or type questions out using Zoom's chat function.

This will be the first virtual job fair for the Port Morrow. Davis said the one scheduled for 2020 took place right before the initial COVID-19 shutdown.

"We've done in-person events similar to this in the SAGE Center," she said. "There's still a need, we just had to get creative with COVID."

PET OF THE WEEK



MEET LILLY

Lilly is like a Golden Lab in a tiny package. She is sweet, silly and soulful. She did have some separation anxiety issues with her previous adopter, so she needs a home where family is there for her, maybe a playmate who isn't demanding. She loves a good belly rub and her soft blanket.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, animal shelters need our help more than ever. Please donate to your local shelter, or offer to foster an animal in need.

If interested please go to fuzzballrescue.com and fill out an application.
If you are not able to adopt, but would like to foster or donate, visit fuzzballrescue.com or you can mail in donations to Fuzz Ball Animal Rescue, PO Box 580, Hermiston, OR 97838

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Community Worship

Featured this Week:

LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH
125 E. Beech Ave. • 567-3232
Pastor David Dever

Sun. Bible Classes.....10:00am
Sun. Worship Service.....11:00am
Sun. Evening Worship.....6:00pm
Wed. Prayer & Bible Study.....6:00pm
www.hermistonlmbc.com

Our Lady of Angels
Catholic Church

565 W. HERMISTON AVE.
MASS SCHEDULES

Monday-Friday.....	English 8:00am
Tuesday-Friday.....	Spanish 6:00pm
SATURDAY.....	English 5:00pm
.....	Spanish 7:00pm
SUNDAY.....	English 9:00am
.....	Spanish 11:00am
.....	Spanish 1:00pm
.....	Spanish 6:00pm
Parish Office.....	541-567-5812

Iglesia Católica Nuestra
Señora de los Angeles

565 W. HERMISTON AVE.
HORARIOS DE MISAS

Lunes a Viernes.....	Inglés 8:00am
Martes a Viernes.....	Español 6:00pm
SABADO.....	Inglés 5:00pm
.....	Español 7:00pm
DOMINGO.....	Inglés 9:00am
.....	Español 11:00am
.....	Español 1:00pm
.....	Español 6:00pm
Oficina Parroquial.....	541-567-5812

Hermiston Christian
Center & School

Sunday Gathering: 10:00 AM

This gathering is also livestreamed on our Facebook page.

Nursery care is available 3 years & under
Kids Club available 4 years-5th grade

Sunday Prayer Gathering: 6:00 PM

NEED PRAYER? CONTACT US!

1825 W. Highland Ave.
541-567-3480 | hcc4u.org
hcc4u2020@gmail.com

Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Saturdays

Sabbath School.....9:30 a.m.

Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.

English & Spanish Services

541-567-8241

855 W. Highland Ave.
Hermiston, OR 97838

St. Johns
Episcopal Church

Join Us

On Our Journey
With Jesus.

Join us on ZOOM 9:00 AM Sunday
Email: chuckb@eotnet.net for link
N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston
PH: 567-6672
We are an all inclusive Church
who welcomes all.

First Christian Church

"Grow Your Faith Through God"

Sunday School...9:00 am
Worship Service...10:30 am

567-3013

775 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston

NEW BEGINNINGS
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Worship Service 10:30 AM
Sunday School 9:00 AM
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Nursery Available
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To advertise in the Church Directory,
please contact Audra Workman
541-564-4538 or email
aworkman@eastoregonian.com