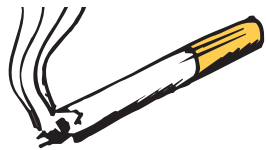


New television ads on health hazards of secondhand smoke



Two new television ads intended to heighten public awareness about the health hazards of secondhand smoke in the workplace, especially bars, were launched last week across the state.

Public health officials in the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) said the 60-second ads use real-life stories to demonstrate that repeated exposure to secondhand smoke can cause illness and death.

"Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard," said Mel Kohn, M.D., state epidemiologist in DHS. "It contains 43 cancer-causing chemicals and can be directly linked to lung cancer and heart disease."

"More than 35,000 Oregonians work in places not covered by Oregon's Indoor Clean Air Act," Kohn said. "These workers, mostly employed in bars, continue to be exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke."

To save the expense of creating advertisements, DHS purchased the rights to air the new ads, which were produced elsewhere, from a resource bank at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. DHS then focus-tested the ads in Oregon to make sure the messages would work for Oregonians.

The ads, which will run statewide on major television stations through this summer and fall, tell about two non-smokers who were victims of deadly illness due to secondhand smoke exposure at work.

One ad features a middle-aged woman named Heather Crowe who supported herself and her daughter as a waitress for 40 years. Crowe tells viewers that the air where she worked was blue from cigarette smoke. Although she never smoked a day in her life, Crowe is now dying of lung cancer caused by secondhand smoke.

The other ad is narrated by Trish Dulka, the daughter of a 54-year-old man who died of lung cancer after working in a smoke-filled environment for 10 years. Sitting at a work desk, Dulka talks about how much secondhand smoke he inhaled over the years, which is illustrated by an equivalent number of cigarettes piling up around her.

Kohn said studies show that non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke are 20 percent to 30 percent more likely to develop lung cancer. Secondhand smoke can also increase the risk of heart disease among non-smokers by as much as 60 percent. In addition, workers who are exposed to secondhand smoke can also develop chronic respiratory illness, Kohn said.

The ads are part of the state's tobacco prevention and education program, a compre-

hensive effort to reduce Oregonian's use of tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke. It is funded by a tobacco

tax increase approved by voters in 1996, which allocated a portion of new revenues for tobacco use reduction. Since

the program began, Oregon has experienced a 42 percent decline in per capita consumption of cigarettes.

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer,
General Manager
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



This issue will cover a factor in our power costs, called

line loss, which may become a topic of conversation for the next month or so. Each utility has a certain amount of line loss, which is the difference between the number of kilowatt hours we purchase and the number of kilowatt hours we sell. Typical reasons for line loss include simple dissipation over long distances, resistance (impedance) at the transformers, and loose connections which occur for all utilities. Average standard line loss in the industry is between 3 to 7 percent. Anything over 7 percent is cause for concern. Ours here at WOEC is at 9 percent, an item of some concern. Where does

the other 2 percent of kilowatt hours we purchase go that we are not collecting revenue for? We are currently conducting an audit, using a certified meter tech, of all of our three phase meters and have just discovered two problems that have been adding to our line loss.

The first of the two problems discovered in our audit, is that a few of the meters have been found to have their shunts in the open position instead of the closed position, meaning the meters are not registering the full amount of kilowatt hours actually being used. The shunts are normally closed unless the meter is being worked on or serviced. After the work or servicing, the shunts should have been closed and, for unknown reasons, they were not closed.

The second problem has to do with an incorrect multiplier or no multiplier being applied to the account. What this means is that a meter on a three phase or two phase account measures kilowatt hours in 5 amp increments. For example, a 200 amp service would use a multi-

plier of 40 for each kilowatt hour used, (1 kilowatt hour revolution = 5 amps so 200 amp meter divided by 5 amp = 40 for the multiplier). We have discovered several accounts where the multiplier was never added to the billing system so they have not been accurately billed for the actual usage.

I know it sounds a little complicated because it is, but this is the simplest way I can explain the problems. It really comes down to several accounts that were not being billed for the full amount of usage. Now that we know about the problem, we have a fiduciary responsibility to correct the problem and bill them for the full amount going forward. Our audit will continue until we have checked all of the three phase accounts, which are a high priority for us. We have implemented steps to make sure the problems are not repeated in the future.

Next issue will cover system maintenance costs and debt load and their impact on rates.

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