

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer,
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Out- age Info and More

The winds that swept through our service area on Sunday, November 12, might not have been the most severe or powerful winds we have experienced, but when combined with a good soaking rain, they were strong enough to knock trees down and blow limbs into our lines. By 11:00 p.m. Sunday night we had lost power to 85 percent of our service territory. The outages were so numerous and so scattered that we did not have the manpower to cover it all before the next storm was anticipated to hit on Wednesday the 15th.

With our Line Crews having been out in the field over 30 hours, we had to make the call

to bring in three outside crews to help us get everyone back on before the second wave of the storm. Clatskanie PUD sent us a crew of three men and we contracted with Michels Power for two crews. They were a great help to us and were excellent to work with to get the system back together. Even with them helping, it was not until 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday that we were finally able to restore power to everyone. A tree took out the feed from PP&L to our Olney metering point, which caused 60 of our members to be out for a day-and-a-half before PP&L could restore their feed to us. Mist West feeder serving 342 members was such a mess it took almost 44 hours and help from one of the extra crews to get it back up.

We still had some isolated outages and two sections of line down on our Timber to Elsie Transmission line when the second wave hit the next day, and we were back in action to get to all of the damaged areas repaired and power restored.

It was quite a long, grueling, and costly week for us. Contract crews don't come cheap, but it would have been impossible for us to get everyone back on before the second storm, which would have put us even further behind. Our normal work gets pushed back during these long outage spells causing us to get behind in our new connects, service work, and tree trimming. Our primary concern is getting the power back on as fast as we can. We appreciate your support and patience during these outage periods.

The first question I will answer in this article fits right in with my comments above. What is the priority given to restoring power to different areas or member? A valid question and one I have answered frequently during outages. Our priority for the most part in restoring power during outages is this: 1) restoring power on transmission lines as they deliver power to all of our substations and from metering points, 2) making sure all of the sub-

stations are energized and able to deliver the power to the distribution lines, 3) checking feeder lines that deliver power from the substations to the individual members meters, 4) restoring power to individual members.

The priority of which substations and feeder lines are worked on first is based on the number of meters fed by that substation or feeder line. The more members affected by the outage receives the higher priority. In some instances, the scope of work may be too much and too dangerous for us to work on with a smaller crew or in the dark, so we may have to isolate the problem and return the next day with a larger crew, the right equipment, and safer working conditions. We do not want to jeopardize the safety of our Line Crew.

The second question I have been asked recently relates to an article in *The Oregonian* regarding a 3 percent rate decrease by BPA and how much of an affect that would have on our rates here at WOEC. I will

try to simplify a complicated formula for as clear a response as I can. The 3 percent rate decrease from BPA was for their block power purchasers. The complicated part for us is we are both a "block" power purchaser and a "slice" power purchaser. It is split almost 50/50 for us, so essentially the 3 percent rate decrease only applies for half of our wholesale power purchases, making it in reality only a 1.5 percent rate decrease for WOEC. This is a savings of about \$37,000 on our power costs.

That amount has been quickly eaten up this year by three events: 1) the price increase in gasoline and diesel for our line trucks, 2) the price we pay for transformers has doubled and tripled for various sizes, and 3) we experienced more outages than we budgeted for this year, due mostly to the amount of rains we had at the beginning of the year (remember the 37 straight days of rain we had in January and February) and the winds we

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The Problem

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The Solution

"We called Clint on November 14. He came the same day with carpet samples and measured and installed the carpet we wanted the day before Thanksgiving. We were able to move in on Thanksgiving. Clint told me he'd get the carpet in before Thanksgiving and he did."



Michelle Dennis, Chase and their dog, Wednesday.

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