

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer,
General Manager,
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B P A ,
P P & L ,
and P G E
h a d
t r e e s
and lines
d o w n
that feed
power to

us. We cleared the transmission line from Vernonia to Timber, expecting our main substation to be energized so we could get the majority of our members up quickly, only to find their crews working on getting power to Tillamook, which had a hospital, dairies, creamery, and a lot more people needing power quickly.

Instead, power was restored at the opposite side of our area from the BPA Warren substation. We had to redirect our effort to repair lines and service from the Warren substation to Chapman. Mist Substation was energized in the meantime, and when the crews were able to repair all of the damaged lines, Chapman Substation was restored about 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. Our crews, determined to get power to Vernonia and Timber Substations, worked through the night in the dark, cold, and fog to get power restored by 4:05 a.m. to Vernonia. Once the substation was restored, then came the feeder lines.

The Engineering and Operations Manager and I continued to search for help from other

utilities and contractors. Most were busy repairing their own systems and contract crews were already assigned to other areas, most to Washington. The first crew to be able to answer our call for help came all the way from Hermiston. Umatilla EC sent a four-man crew with three four-wheel drive trucks to offer assistance. They went right to work and worked through the night with our own crews to help restore power and put up lines. Forest Grove Light & Power sent crews and trucks, followed by Wasco EC in The Dalles, Columbia River PUD, Blachly Lane EC in Eugene, and Clatskanie PUD. Michels Power sent a six man "heavy gang" crew and equipment to help us with the big lines and poles. All worked long hours and covered as much territory as possible. The going is slow in most areas due to the magnitude of the damage. Sleep is minimal or non-existent as the crews continue to push as hard and long as they can, knowing that members have been without power for days.

The inside staff has been rotating around the clock, as the phones are manned 24 hours a day, to answer members calls and questions. The frustration is felt on both sides of the phone as members want specific times when their power will be restored and our staff, in a lot of cases, is not able to provide them this information because we simply do not know for sure. At first it was because we did not know when we would be receiving power from

BPA, PP&L, and PGE as they worked diligently to get their systems repaired.

Then it became a matter of limited resources, manpower, and hours in the day. The extent of the damage could not be known until we actually arrived at the site and in most areas it was severe, which took longer to repair. Crews who came to help had to be divided and paired with our Linemen so they could be with someone who knew the system, where things were, and how it was connected, and be able to communicate with one another with our radio communications. The radio communication is especially important for the safety of the crews so they know when someone else was working on a line being energized. If they were unaware of someone else working on the line and it was energized, people would be seriously injured or killed. It is a very carefully orchestrated and organized process of working on and reenergizing electrical lines.

The work continues and we are working as long and hard as possible while keeping the safety of our staff and crews in mind. This storm will prove to be a very damaging, long, and expensive one. As I stated earlier, it will go down in our history as one of the top three storms. We feel for our members who had to endure long outages and inconveniences that come with the loss of power. We assure you that we are using every resource and effort to get power to you as quickly as is humanly possible. No ex-

pense is being spared and the staff and crews here are giving all they have to the goal of restoring power to our members. It is and has been a long

and difficult event for all of us, and we sincerely appreciate everyone's patience and support throughout this ordeal.



Above, this piece of equipment should be attached to a power pole, not hanging from downed lines out on Keasey Road. Below, Pebble Creek Rd. had it all; downed power lines, damaged power poles and fallen trees. Scenes like these were common throughout the area after the windstorm that hit on December 14.



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