

Power of the People

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



Storm Damage Update

We're still picking up some of

the pieces from the big storm last month and assessing the final costs. One of the tree crews is working solely on clearing lines while the second crew is working problems trees as a result of the storm, and trees that we know are going to be a problem the next storm. Our Line Crews and Staff have finally had some time to catch up on their rest since the weather has provided a break for us.

The bills are still rolling in from all of the crews, materials, fuel, and other expenses that resulted from the storm. At this stage of the game it appears as though the costs will be over \$500,000 for the entire system with the exception of the Timber-Elsie Transmission Line. The costs to repair at first glance will be around \$750,000. When I say first glance I mean just that. The transmission line goes across country, through mountains and trees, and is not accessible by roads. Two of our staff got a free ride from the Coast Guard and flew over it to assess the damage. Line, cross arms, and conductors are down over most

of it and it will take a lot of time and money to rebuild the line. This puts us in a difficult position. To understand why, let me go back to when we first built the line.

The Timber-Elsie Transmission Line is a 16 mile line that crosses three counties – Washington County through Tillamook County and into Clatsop County – and cost over \$1.5 million 12 years ago to construct. The state and ODOT wanted it built away from Highway 26 so that it would not detract from the scenic views. There are big problems building it away from the highway. To begin with, the cost of building the line increased as a large portion had to be built by helicopter and heavy equipment, additionally, crews had to hike or take ATVs to get to the poles and line. Tree sizes were small when it was constructed, but have now grown on both sides of the line with many of them from 60 to 120 feet tall. With only a 40 foot right of way, any storms or heavy rains that cause the trees to fall, takes them right through our lines from both sides. To do any work on the line is expensive, as the majority of it is not accessible by roads. It is more time-consuming and dangerous as the poles have to be climbed rather than worked on from a truck with all of the tools available and easily accessible.

So, what do we do now? We have three basic options:

1.) Rebuild the line where it is, at a cost of approximately

\$750,000, knowing that during the next storm more trees will take parts of it down again.

2.) Meet with the state, ODOT, and private property owners and clear farther back from the line, which at this point would be a logging operation that would require building some roads to the line, giving us better access.

3.) Meeting with all of the before mentioned parties to get permission to relocate the line down the highway, which would increase the cost to between \$4 and \$5 million. There is a possibility of undergrounding a good portion of the line along the highway, but this would push the cost even higher. The positive in this scenario is that falling trees would no longer be an issue unless the roots of one pulled the line up out of the ground.

We could, of course, abandon the line altogether. Here is why doing nothing is not a possibility. This line is the main transmission line feeding our system. We currently are being fed from another line, but with only the two lines, we know we are at risk of not being able to transmit power to our system if anything happens to it. There would be no redundancy in our transmission system. We have to either replace or rebuild the line.

WOEC is now in the process of determining which course to follow. We have met with FEMA to see if we can recover most of our costs (they usually pay up to 75 percent of the loss) to re-

build the line and/or how much we might be able to obtain to replace the line and move it elsewhere. They will be assessing our situation and respond, which usually takes at least three months.

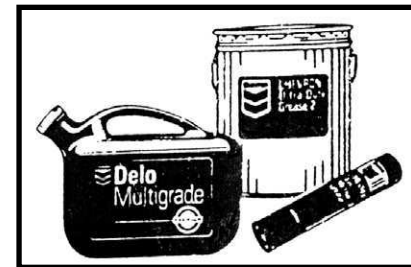
Meanwhile, we will be hiking and/or driving an ATV from one end of the line to the other end to get an accurate assessment of the amount of damage and what it will take to rebuild the line. There will be a financial impact to WOEC. The amount

will be determined by how much we receive from FEMA funding. If FEMA comes through for us, they will also mitigate the moving of the line with the affected parties if it is determined that to do so would be the best course of action. I will keep you posted on what we decide to do and what the final impact to WOEC will be. Let's all hope that FEMA funding becomes available to reduce the cost to us all.

Run with Extra Confidence with Chevron DELO 400™ PLUS MOTOR OIL

The name you trust for:

- Gasoline
- Diesel Fuel
- Oils • Solvents
- Additives • Greases



Winter is here... see us for



ANTI FREEZE HEATING OIL



CALL
(503) 429-6606



WILCOX & FLEGEL

720 Rose Avenue • Vernonia



503-429-0280 Basic Auto Repair



Specializing in Brakes & Light Auto Repair

Oil Change Special \$19.95

most cars & trucks - up to 5 quarts

Transmission service

Open Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday call for appointment

Rotor and drum machine on site

62481 Nehalem Hwy 47 North, next to Spartree Restaurant