

Power of the People

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Security, a Serious Issue

Recently, I have dedicated articles to the issue of security and theft at our pole yard. Unfortunately, the problem is getting worse, not better. We are experiencing break-ins at the substations. It is now going to cost the members of this cooperative some significant money in an attempt to better secure our facilities due to increased thefts.

Our pole yard and equipment for our tree trimmers were hit by serious theft a couple of months ago. Wire and several pieces of equipment were taken from the pole yard, along with most of the equipment and personal items of the tree crew out of their trucks. The thieves cut through the fence and dragged off the materials and equipment. With each of the break-ins, the amount of stolen equipment is growing. It has forced us to look into different ways of securing the pole yard, as we will not let these types of thefts continue.

Even more serious is that three of our substations also were hit by thefts. This becomes a very dangerous situation for the thieves, as well as for my Linemen who go to work in the substations. They are walking into a hazardous environment when grounding and/or neutrals have been cut and removed. This puts lives in jeopardy, and it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed.

When the thieves are in the substations stealing equipment, they are also putting the reliability

of the electric system at risk. Outages will occur for all of the members served off of that substation when this occurs. It would be a big help if our members report observing anyone in one of our substations who is not in a West Oregon Electric vehicle. We need our members' help in being our eyes and ears for stopping, or identifying and prosecuting anyone stealing from our substations or pole yard. Please let us know if you are aware of anything that would help us stop these people who are costing all of us money, jeopardizing their lives as well as my staff, and the reliability of our power grid.

The Co-op will be considering alternatives at our next board meeting to better secure our facilities. These options will cost thousands of dollars. We are looking at more secure fencing and gates that will be installed in the pole yard and substations. We also are looking into an alarm system with cameras that has been used by the military, that can separate humans from animals. The video from the cameras will be web-based and can be accessed by the security company and myself when there is a break in. The video will allow us to identify the party or parties involved for prosecution. These solutions will come at a big expense to the Co-op, but the incidents of thefts are increasing. We must protect the safety of our people, the integrity of the system, and our equipment.

The problem is not just here, but is being experienced by utilities across the country. They are all adding security measures, and facing the cost of implementing them. The legislature has several bills it is considering to help with the growing problem of metal thefts. We will utilize measures as necessary to protect our system, our people, and our facilities against those who have such a blatant disregard for others. We will use whatever tools the legislature, police, and available security systems can and will provide. This is very serious and costly, and I hope you will all assist us in fighting this growing problem. The cost right now is being measured in dollars, but if these thefts continue, it will be measured in lives.

Vernonia Pioneer Museum hosts Museum Talk by Ralph Condit

On Sunday, April 22, the Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association will host a Museum Talk by Ralph Condit. This event will be held at 2:00 p.m. at the Vernonia Pioneer Museum, 555 E. Bridge Street.

In 1920, a group of people from Sublette, Idaho, made their way to Vernonia. Among them were Herbert and Ida Condit and their children, including Ralph, who was three at the time. They lived on Stoney Point Road. Their neighbors were the Parkers, one of the earliest families to settle in this area. Five of the Condit children became teachers after their early education in Vernonia. Grace (Condit) Mathews remained in Vernonia, and her brother, Ed, later returned and became the high school principal in Vernonia. There is a scholarship given out annually in his name. Ralph Condit has been a long time Vernonia supporter even after he left the area to work for Boeing.

The museum association wants to thank everyone who

participated in last month's talk on the Vernonia melodramas and special thanks to those who donated their memorabilia to the Museum. In the 1970s, May was Melodrama Month. This May, the Museum will have a special exhibit honoring these long-remembered plays that were annual community events for many years.

The museum has scheduled two Spring clean up days. On Make Vernonia Shine Day, April 28, members of the recently formed Garden Club have volunteered to help spruce up the flower beds. Additional volunteers to help in the yard, as well as inside the museum, are welcome. There will be another inside clean up day on Thursday, May 10, starting at 10:00 am. Any help would be appreciated.

The museum's winter hours (1:00-4:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays) continue through May. The next Museum Board meeting is Wednesday, May 9, at 7:00 p.m. All members and supporters of the museum are welcome to attend.

**Spring has sprung, get out and
enjoy the longer, warmer days.**

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