

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer,
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Rate Increase Defined

The West Oregon Electric Board of Directors approved a total rate increase of 9 percent, with 5 percent to take effect on October 1, 2007, and 4 percent to take effect on October 1, 2008. Upon staff's recommendation and with input from the Rate Hearing, the rate will be mostly in the facility charge. Staff recommendation for the increase to be placed in the facility charge is due to several reasons.

First, it is the most equitable form of rate increase across all classes. It is fair for everyone, no matter how much electricity they use, to pay their share of the costs to maintain the system. Even if someone has only a seasonal home on our system, it takes just as much money to maintain their meter, lines, transformers, substation, and service their account as everyone else.

Second, since the rate increase is based on operational needs and issues rather than power supply costs, and the facility charge is the main portion of our rate that goes toward system costs, it was the natural place for the increase. If the rate increase was due to an increase in our wholesale power costs, then the logical place to spread the increased costs is in the kilowatt hour charge. Those who use more power and therefore increase the amount of expenses for power pay their fair share of the usage. It doesn't increase the cost of system maintenance to sell

them more power, just our power bill goes up. Third, the fact is that even with the increase of five dollars per month on the facility charge, (from \$17.50 to \$22.50), we are not even coming close to covering the actual amount of fixed costs to maintain the system. Our newest COSA (Cost of Service Analysis conducted by an outside company), shows that the actual cost of maintaining each residential account is over \$61 per month. Electric utilities are the only utilities I know of that don't charge all of their fixed costs up front, and then usage afterwards. Telephone, cell phones, gas, water, and sewer all charge fixed costs up front. If we did this, our facilities charge would be about \$61 per month, and then our kilowatt hour charges would be greatly reduced.

There are only two ways we obtain the revenue needed to operate, either the facility charge or the kilowatt hour charge. We try to maintain a balance between the two that is fair to all of the different rate classes. Rate classes include residential, small commercial, large commercial, industrial, security lights, area lighting, and irrigation. Most utilities have a balanced mix of the different classes that helps reduce the overall maintenance costs for their service area. We are not balanced, as roughly 90 percent of our system is residential and is spread throughout a large area. Our cost to serve each meter is then considerably higher than a more compact, densely populated and balanced area. We are at a disadvantage, but do all that we can to provide for the needs of our members. This increase will help make sure we have service today and for the future of WOEC. Copies of the new rate schedule are available at the West Oregon Electric office.

Now is time to winterize boat and here's how

When the leaves start to turn amber and gold and the sun starts to rise later each day, that's the seasonal signal to start planning on winterizing your boat. With temperatures already dipping into near-freezing temperatures, it's even more important to winterize your boat sooner this year to avoid costly repairs in the spring. Here's a list to make winterizing your boat a little faster:

1. If possible, store your boat ashore for the winter. The bulkhead, keel and motor are the critical areas needing support. Cradles work best, but don't store your boat on a cradle that wasn't designed for the boat you have.

2. If you store your boat in the water, make sure to close all through-hull fittings, gate valves and seacocks to keep the water out. As water freezes, it expands and can break these important features. Also, plug

any exhaust ports. Do not, however, close cockpit drains. Check on your boat occasionally to make sure lines are secure and the bilge remains dry.

3. Make sure to cover your boat. Use a frame under the cover to prevent water from pooling or tearing the cover. Canvas is best because it breathes. If you use plastic, make sure you leave vents in it to allow any moisture to escape. Allow for drainage if you're storing outside.

4. Add non-toxic antifreeze to

water tanks, toilets and septic holding tanks. Never use engine antifreeze in a freshwater system.

5. Make sure to remove any electronic equipment, important documents or other valuables. Marinas are more like ghost yards in the winter, and tempting to thieves.

Your Engine:

- Drain the cooling system and add anti-freeze. On outboards, this means filling a large bucket or drum with

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A happy Mike Fennell holds the Ruger 300 Magnum rifle he just won, presented by Bill James, at the Vernonia Senior Center Fishing and Hunting Raffle and Dinner on September 22. The food was good and the prizes, both door and raffle, were many. The event raised over \$3,000 for the building fund for a new senior center.

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