

Power of the People

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



Good News and Updates

I finally get to report some good news for West Oregon Electric Cooperative. We have received news from Senator Ron Wyden's Office and Representative David Wu's Office that WOEC has a \$475,000 earmark in the Omnibus Bill. The request for these funds was submitted in February of 2008. The bill should soon be passed and the President has indicated he will sign it immediately. It will take about three months from there for the Co-op to receive the funds. This money is earmarked for the construction of the new Vernonia Substation. The new substation will be designed in 2009 and constructed in 2010.

The current main substation that serves Vernonia is located behind Vernonia Cares and was flooded in 1996 and underwater in 2007. Flood waters shorted out the reclosures causing us to lose power to Vernonia in the afternoon of the 2007 event. Adding to the situation is the fact that the current transformer is due to be replaced next year as it will be 40 years old, typically the expected guaranteed lifespan of a transformer. It made no sense to put a brand new transformer back into the flood plain so we are taking this opportunity to relocate the main substation up where it will be safe from flood waters and able to continue to provide power during a flood event. It will be constructed on property WOEC already owns and serves as our pole yard.

Watch out for new jury duty scam

Oregon Attorney General John Kroger is warning Oregon citizens about a jury duty scam that seeks to trick consumers into providing personal, confidential information. The scam involves emails and telephone calls that claim recipients have missed jury duty and will be arrested or face other legal sanctions if they do not turn over Social Security numbers, bank accounts information or dates of birth.

Oregonians recently have been receiving emails with what appear to be subpoenas from the U.S. District Court. These are invalid and may contain harmful links to viruses and identity thieves.

Most of the bogus emails come from "uscourts.com," which is not a government Web

site.

Oregon residents receiving jury scam calls or emails should call local police or the Attorney General's consumer protection hotline at 1-877-877-9392 or online at www.doj.state.or.us.

Consumers who think they may have turned over personal financial information to jury duty scammers should go to the Federal Trade Commission website at <http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft> for specific directions in defending themselves against ID theft.

Consumers who have been legitimately summoned for jury duty may find information at the Oregon Judicial Department's website: <http://www.ojd.state.or.us/jurorinfo/index.htm>.

SBA offers free small business briefing

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Portland District Office, 601 S.W. 2nd Ave., Suite 2030, Portland, will hold a free briefing on Financing a Small Business, on Thursday, March 19, from 11:30 a.m to 12:30 p.m.

The loan briefing is presented by a SBA Loan Specialist and will cover financing options to start or grow a small business. Topics will include: SBA Loan Guarantee Program, credit requirements, use of proceeds, how to approach a

lender and loan proposal assistance.

Time permitting, there will be a mini-tour of the Business Re-

source Center. No early registration is required. For additional information, call 503-326-2682.

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Buying unwanted vehicles with clear title

Since applying for the funding a year ago, we have been hopefully watching the progress of our request as it went through committees, then to the House and Senate, then to the Joint Committee for consideration. What started out as a \$1.5 million request was pared down to \$475,000, approved by both the Senate and the House, and inserted into the Omnibus Bill. We would like to express our appreciation for all of the work done by then Senator Gordon Smith and Senator Ron Wyden on the Senate side and Representative David Wu on the House side. Without them and their staff who worked so hard on our behalf, we wouldn't have received these much-needed funds. We extend our gratitude and thanks to them for their assistance and work.

As an update on the Timber/Elsie Transmission Line project, the WOEC Board of Directors awarded the bid for undergrounding the line to Michels Power. They will begin construction of the line as soon as the final permit from Washington County is received. The line is being paid for with \$1,984,031 million of FEMA funds, \$600,000 of Oregon Emergency Management funds (which we applied for as a result of the windstorm in 2006), The remaining \$3,431,762 will come from a low interest Rural Utility Services Loan, around 3.25 percent over 30 years. We are excited to get this line back into operation and underground, which will increase the reliability of the transmission line and decrease the costs of maintenance and repair as a result of wind and tree damage.

We are working with our local, state, and federal elected officials to see how WOEC might benefit from Stimulus Bill Funds. We are actively pursuing funds and programs that will be of benefit to our members and our system. We have successfully applied for and received over \$1 million so far for WOEC projects and will continue to bring needed resources to our service area.

Sheriff's Office offers self-defense class

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office will offer a self-defense class to the public on Saturday, April 11, in the Sheriff's Office Training/Conference Room at 901 Port Avenue, in St. Helens. The class will be from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is no charge to Columbia County residents.

The course will be taught by certified defensive tactics instructors who received their certification through the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) and American Council on Criminal Justice Training (ACCJT). The course is designed to teach participants skills to protect themselves in situations that could result in

serious assault or death. The course will be taught in "hands on" format. Topics will include personal safety strategies for the workplace and travel.

All participants are asked to bring a bottle of water and to wear comfortable clothing, socks and tennis shoes. Participants under the age of 18 are required to have a parent present and sign a release form in order to participate in the class. If you plan to send your child with another adult, please contact the Sheriff's Office prior to the class to ensure the accom-

modation can be made. Due to the mature nature of the information presented, this class is not appropriate for children 13 years and younger. Future classes will be provided to meet the needs of our younger citizens.

Class space is limited and individuals interested in participating must pre-register to attend. Registration forms are available at the Columbia County Sheriff's Office or by contacting Deputy Caldwell or Deputy Ritchie at 503-366-4611, Monday through Friday.



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