

Power of the People

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



And Away We Go

While the beginning of 2009 had us buried in snow, so far this winter we've made it through the holiday season without a fourth FEMA event. It was so nice to have staff and crews home for the holidays for the first time in four years. I can imagine all of our members were glad to have their lights on and fully cooked dinners this year as well. Let's hope this New Year is better than last one in all aspects for all of us.

Speaking of the New Year, we are going to be very busy in 2010. West Oregon Electric Cooperative has several major projects we will be undertaking this year. The first one will be the construction of a new main substation for Vernonia. With the substation having been under water twice in eleven years and needing a new transformer, it made no sense to put a new transformer back into a known flood plain. We've started the planning, design, and environmental review of the new Vernonia Substation that will be located at the current pole yard. If everything goes according to plan we should have it completed by the end of this year.

We will be designing it to be much more efficient, easier to operate, and easier to do switching from one transmission feed to another. We are hoping to underground the lines in and out of the new substation and into the present Vernonia substation to increase reliability. Not only will it reduce the risk of outages for this stretch of line, it will better enhance the beauty as you enter Vernonia and on to Anderson Park.

Once the new substation is completed, we will be removing the East Substation, also referred to as the Alder Substation. This substation sits in the flood plain as well, so we will retire the old transformer and use the current Vernonia Substation as the backup substation.

We are also in the process of building a new Headquarters facility out of the flood plain. We have selected a site and are doing all of the preparatory work before beginning construction. A sales agreement, environmental review of the site, contractor selection, and traffic study will be the first phases of the project to be completed. Once the contractor is selected, we will commence with the final design work, obtain permits

when the studies are completed, and then begin construction with the aggressive goal of having the project done by the end of 2010. The reason for pushing to get the project done in 2010 is to take advantage of the low costs of construction before they go back up, thus keeping costs to a minimum, and to reduce the risk of us going through another flood event before we get relocated. We also want to use the opportunity to help stimulate the local economy, as one of the requirements we placed on the project is that the contractor will use as many local products, goods, services, and laborers as possible. We will be reviewing every contract bid throughout the project to make sure this requirement is met. We hope this project will be a big boost to Vernonia and be a positive sign that the town is not only recovering from the flood event, but is alive and moving forward.

It should be a very busy year with some very positive and constructive projects for West Oregon Electric Cooperative that will not only benefit our members this year, but well into our future.

All boaters now need boater card

Beginning in 2010, all Oregon boaters 12 and older must carry their boater education card when operating power boats greater than 10 horsepower. The Oregon Legislature passed the mandatory boater education law in 1999, giving the Marine Board ten years to phase in the requirement based on age.

To qualify for a boater education card, a person must show that they have completed an approved education course. Courses are readily available through the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadron, county law enforcement officers and other partners, or via approved Internet courses accessible at www.boatoregon.com.

"Education makes a difference," says MariAnn Koloszar, Marine Board education coordinator. "We've seen a reduction in boating related accidents since the program began." In 1995, Oregon had 144 reported recreational boating accidents and for the last several years, the number of accidents has been reduced by more than half that amount. "When it's beautiful outside, people flock to the waterways. When you have congestion, it

becomes even more important to know the navigation rules, proper launching techniques and boater etiquette. Law enforcement reports 80 percent compliance with the mandatory education law and now receives fewer complaints from boaters. When boaters play by the same rules, it's safer and more fun on the water," Koloszar adds.

The program will now focus on new boaters. "Young boaters, people just getting into boating and new residents will be our most common customers now that the age-based phase-in is complete," says Koloszar.

As most boaters now know, the mandatory education law requires all persons 12 and older to have a boater education card when operating powerboats greater than 10 horsepower. Youth 12 - 15 must have a card to operate a power boat under 10 horse power and must also be supervised by a card-holding adult when operating power boats greater than 10 horsepower.

For more information, check the Mandatory Boater Education information at www.boatoregon.com.



**Sometimes
the safest place
to be is right
where you are.**

During a hazardous material accident or an attack, officials may ask you to "shelter-in-place". Basically, it means stay right where you are. But there are many ways to make sure you are as safe as possible when this happens.

Many businesses, schools and other public facilities have shelter plans to support anyone in the building at the time an emergency is declared. Columbia 9-1-1 urges you to be prepared to shelter-in-place within your own home as well.

First, choose a room that will be your shelter, ideally one with as few windows and doors as possible. A water supply is useful too. Assemble a 72-hour disaster supply kit that includes water, food, clothing and other emergency supplies. Finally, develop your own family emergency plan, and practice it regularly.

If you are told to shelter-in-place, act quickly. Bring children and pets inside and lock all doors and windows. Turn off any heating, air or ventilation system. You may be asked to seal off your shelter room with plastic sheeting and duct tape. For detailed information about doing this, go to www.ready.gov. Do not go outside until you hear

a report that all is clear. Listen to the radio, or if you have power, rely on the internet for updates. Your family may not all be in the same place when it's time to shelter-in-place. If they are in a school or at work, they will be sheltered there. As difficult as it may be, do not go search for them. If you don't know where they are and cannot make contact with them, call our non-emergency number, (503) 397-1521, or 1-800-696-7795.

Thinking about a disaster can be stressful, but planning ahead can make a big difference. It may also help to remember that Columbia 9-1-1 will be assisting emergency personnel around the clock to keep everyone in our communities safe. We ask for your help in keeping the emergency phone lines clear—only call 9-1-1 for life-threatening emergencies. For more detailed information about shelter-in-place planning, visit www.redcross.org or www.ready.gov.



**Columbia 9-1-1
Communications District.
Always there.**