

Power of the People

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



Board Votes to Apply for Grant

It may seem like all of our focus is on the building at times, but there is a lot more going on, and our plate just got a little fuller at the last Board of Directors meeting. One of the silver linings from experiencing three FEMA events in a row at WOEC is that we have developed a good relationship with them and Oregon Emergency Management (OEM). We joke that we have FEMA and OEM on speed dial, and are on their Christmas card list. This turned out to be more true than we thought.

A few months back, we were meeting with OEM to finish up the Timber/Elsie transmission line project. Remember, we undergrounded most of the line that was damaged from the 2006 and 2007 wind storms, at a cost of \$6.2 million dollars. The reason we could undertake such a huge project is that FEMA covered a major portion of the costs as it was declared a FEMA disaster event, and OEM provided over \$500,000 under a program called the Hazard Mitiga-

tion Grant. This grant goes to a project that will mitigate FEMA having to provide disaster funds ever again for this particular project by taking measures to eliminate the possibility of a disaster event occurring in the future. By undergrounding the transmission line, we eliminated the possibility of wind storms again destroying the line, which also eliminated FEMA from having to provide disaster funds in the future. We received the final grant and disaster funds from completion of this project after our final meeting with OEM.

It was at this meeting that we were presented with another possible Christmas present from FEMA. We were told of another program called the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant. It is a grant that is similar to the Hazard Mitigation Grant, because its purpose is to provide funds for a project that would eliminate future FEMA funding for a disaster event if the project is successfully completed. It is a competitive process, so we would not be guaranteed funding if we apply, but if successful, we can receive up to \$3 million towards our project if we match it with \$1 million of our own funds. The project we have selected for consideration is to underground crucial sections of the Timber to Vernonia Transmission Line.

This means we could underground the

line for 25 cents on the dollar, which would result in increased reliability, dramatically reduce outages, expenses and maintenance costs, and increase the longevity of the line. The Board unanimously approved applying for the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant and to hire a professional consultant to prepare the grant application to increase the possibility of being successful in the competitive process. We would use some of our RUS Loan funds to pay for our matching share of the project. We won't know until next year if we are successful, but an opportunity to accomplish a huge project like this and have to pay for only a fourth of the costs was too good to pass up. Keep your fingers, and maybe even your toes crossed for us. We will begin immediately working on the application and give it our best shot.

Beware these "sweepstakes" scams

Attorney General John Kroger is warning Oregonians to not respond to unsolicited "sweepstakes" phone calls. Both the Marion County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Justice's Consumer Hotline have received reports about suspicious callers who notify consumers that they have won a sweepstakes and then instruct them to purchase a prepaid credit card to cover "taxes" or "fees" associated with collecting their cash prize.

One Marion County resident was contacted on his cell phone earlier last week by a con artist who asked him to purchase three \$1,000 Green Dot MoneyPak credit cards. In order to collect his sweepstakes prize, the man was told he must call an Idaho number and read the serial numbers off the back of the cards. Fortunately, he smelled a rat and called the Marion County Sheriff's Office instead.

Bogus sweepstakes and lottery offers are among the most common types of scams run by crooks who seek to rip off Oregon consumers. These operations are often run by perpetrators located outside the U.S. — making it very difficult for law enforcement agencies to track them down. In 2010 the Department received 1,054 complaints about international

money schemes, with \$1,999,323 in reported losses — more than double the \$707,783 reportedly lost in 2009.

Attorney General Kroger offers the following advice to consumers when it comes to unsolicited telephone calls, mail or e-mail about a sweepstakes or lottery:

- Never pay to play in a sweepstakes.
- Never pay money to claim a prize.
- Do not give out your prepaid credit card number to someone you don't know (learn more about Green Dot prepaid cards).

• Participating in a foreign lottery is illegal and such lotteries often have close ties to organized crime.

• Beware of fake organizations that go by names similar to more widely-known groups

in order to trick consumers.

• Government agencies do not sponsor sweepstakes.

• Beware of requests for information about your income, credit card ownership, or bank accounts as a condition of participating in a sweepstakes or lottery.

• Do not participate in sweepstakes or respond to advertisements that resemble a check, bill or invoice.

• Destroy fake sweepstakes or lottery offers by shredding or deleting them.

The Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline, 1-877-877-9392, is a free resource for all Oregonians with consumer-related questions, concerns or complaints. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a sweepstakes or lottery scam, please contact the Consumer Hotline for assistance.

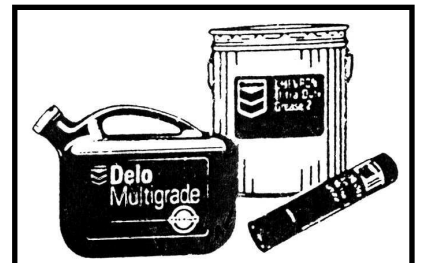
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