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## **BPA re-routes 500,000 volts of power after gunshot vandalism damages transmission tower**

**Information leading to vandals worth up to \$1,000**

**Bonneville Power Administration**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, Oct. 20, 1995**

**BELLINGHAM, Wash.** --Reckless gunslingers caused a 21-hour power outage on a 500,000-volt electrical transmission line between Custer and Bellingham, Wash., on Monday, Oct. 9, 1995. Luckily, Bonneville Power Administration operators were able to re-route pathways for the power so there was no disruption of service to the homes and businesses of Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.

The vandals severely damaged 16 out of 20 insulators on a transmission structure northeast of Bellingham in Whatcom County at the end of Academy Road. Vandalism and illegal dumping are becoming a frequent problem in this area. This single incident is estimated to cost almost \$12,000. It would have been significantly higher if BPA had not been able to provide alternative pathways for the electricity.

"Costly behavior such as illegal dumping of garbage and cars, and destruction of transmission equipment is a serious, ongoing problem in this area," according to Mike Berg, Crime Witness program manager. **Anyone with further information that could lead to the vandals is encouraged to call BPA's Crime Witness hotline, 1-800-437-2744. Information is worth up to \$1,000.** Witnesses' names are kept confidential.

Shooting at insulators is not only expensive, it's dangerous. Downed lines can cause field and forest fires, and ground voltages can be deadly. In addition, fire departments, police and hospitals are all dependent upon electricity in life-and-death situations. When vandals, thieves or illegal dumpers manage to put a line out of service, it's not "harmless" horseplay.

Theft, vandalism and illegal dumping cost BPA around \$1 million each year. These costs inevitably trickle down to ratepayers. In an effort to curb these infractions, BPA created the Crime Witness Program--an aggressive, large scale, neighborhood watch-style program. Again, anyone who sees or suspects a crime to the BPA transmission system, property or personnel is encouraged to report it by calling 1-800-437-2744. Cash rewards of up to \$1,000 are paid for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons committing crimes against BPA. Names of witnesses and reward amounts are kept confidential.

"In the long term, the Crime Witness Program should not only reduce vandalism, it should keep costs and rates down," says Robert Windus, security manager at BPA. "In the last 18 months, more than 100 incidents have been reported. Eight have led to arrests. Three others involving illegal dumping resulted in the mess being cleaned up at the dumpers' expense--not the ratepayers. More than 40 other cases involving trespassing, poaching and illegal dumping on non-BPA property were referred to appropriate

law enforcement agencies. With almost \$500,000 in savings to BPA this year alone, the program is already paying off"

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