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## **Dangerous vandalism causes Missoula-area outage**

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

**Bonneville Power Administration**

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

**MISSOULA, Mont. -- Vandalism resulted in the recent 18-hour outage for electricity customers in the area southwest of Missoula, Mont. The Bonneville Power Administration is asking for help in identifying the vandals that caused the costly damage, offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to their arrest.**

Nearly all 15 insulators on a transmission structure along the Garrison - Taft 500-kilovolt line were severely damaged by gunfire. A BPA maintenance crew was dispatched to the site and repaired the damage immediately. The Garrison - Taft line runs through portions of Granite, Missoula and Powell counties.

The exact time and date of the vandalism are unknown, but it is estimated to have occurred just prior to Sunday, Oct. 8, when electrical service to the area was disrupted. Anyone with further information that could lead to the vandals is encouraged to call BPA's Crime Witness hotline, 1-800-437-2744. Information could be worth up to \$1,000. Witness' names are kept confidential.

BPA spends almost \$500,000 every year to replace transmission line insulators damaged and destroyed by gunshot vandalism. The price to repair this latest incident is almost \$7,000. On top of this is an even greater cost of lost power sales revenue and the economic costs to customers resulting from the disruption of electrical service. When these indirect costs are factored in, the total price of this one incident is approximately \$12,000.

Vandals shooting at insulators for fun should consider the dangers and consequences. Downed lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages can kill or seriously injure the vandals themselves, as well as other people. Fire departments, police and hospitals are all dependent upon a reliable supply of electricity to be able to respond to emergencies.

When vandals, thieves or illegal dumpers manage to put a line out of service, it's not "harmless" horseplay. 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. The program is already paying off."

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**For more informaton, contact: Mike Berg, BPA, (503) 230-4274, [mwberg@bpa.gov](mailto:mwberg@bpa.gov).**

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