



Vandalism brings high-voltage conductor to the ground

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

Bonneville Power Administration

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WALLA WALLA, Wash. -- The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the vandals that shot at a transmission tower along the Walla Walla - North Lewiston 115,000-volt line. The gunshot vandalism caused an outage along the line and brought a conductor to the ground. BPA was able to re-route electrical pathways, avoiding a disruption of service to homes and businesses in surrounding communities. However, due to bad weather conditions, it was several days before a maintenance crew was able to repair the damage.

The vandalism took place in an area on the north side of the Snake River crossing.

The Walla Walla - North Lewiston Line runs through Walla Walla, Columbia and Garfield counties. Although the exact time and date of the vandalism is unknown, it most likely occurred over the weekend prior to Monday, Oct. 9, when sections of the Walla Walla - North Lewiston Line relayed out of service. Vandalism to BPA property increases on weekends and holidays when some individuals foolishly choose shooting at power equipment as their outdoor recreation.

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 single incident will be almost \$8,000. Economic consequences, had there been a loss of power to customers, would make the price significantly higher.

The recent vandalism was especially dangerous because a power line was brought to the ground. 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. With more than \$1 million in savings to BPA to date, the program is already paying off."

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