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Dangerous Gunshot Vandalism Cripples Power Lines in Morrow County

Information Leading to Vandals Worth up to \$1,000

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PORTLAND, Ore. -- The Bonneville Power Administration needs help identifying the criminals who vandalized one of its power lines in Morrow County on February 24. Damage to the Ione - Boardman 69,000-volt transmission line caused it to relay out of service, disrupting power to Columbia Basin Electric Co-op customers for four and a half hours. BPA crews dispatched to the trouble spot discovered gunshot damage on three insulator strings which caused the line failure.

The Ione - Boardman Transmission Line runs in a north-south direction through the middle of Morrow County, Oregon. Gunshots damaged the power lines at a transmission structure located about one half mile off of Juniper Canyon Road, in between the towns of Boardman and Ione.

"Costly behavior such as destruction of transmission equipment and illegal dumping 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.

Theft, vandalism and illegal dumping cost BPA around \$1 million each year. Over \$400,000 is spent to replace gunshot damaged insulators alone. These costs inevitably trickle down to ratepayers. The price to repair this latest incident is estimated at almost \$3,000. Indirect costs to BPA customers resulting from lost power total an additional \$4,000, raising the economic consequences significantly higher.

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Crime Witness

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More importantly, 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 two years, some 200 incidents have been reported. Many of these have led to arrests. Others involving illegal dumping resulted in the mess being cleaned up at the dumpers' expense - not the ratepayers. Savings to ratepayers resulting from the program now exceed \$1 million."

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