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BPA, WSCC take steps to bolster system reliability

**Joint news release:
Bonneville Power Administration
Western Systems Coordinating Council**

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PORTLAND, Ore. — At an emergency meeting called by the Western Systems Coordinating Council (WSCC) yesterday afternoon in Portland, Oregon, and attended by Department of Energy Deputy Secretary Charles Curtis, senior management from western utilities, and the regulatory community, the western utilities agreed to immediately implement steps that will ensure the reliability of the western region's transmission system and decrease the probability of another western system-wide disturbance.

The following actions are being taken to minimize the potential for future outages:

- power flows on the Pacific AC Intertie have been limited to 75 percent of maximum capacity pending further study and a review by WSCC;
- a comprehensive study will be conducted by the Bonneville Power Administration to assess voltage support capability of its system;
- BPA has agreed to report all outages of 500,000-volt transmission lines and other key facilities on its system;
- WSCC has asked its members to review their tree trimming programs and report any changes that have been or will be implemented; and
- WSCC has recommended that all utilities review their transmission systems' ability to maintain appropriate system voltage levels during system disturbances.

As part of a short-term effort, BPA also has:

- immediately removed all trees involved in the Aug. 10 disturbance and has implemented a more aggressive effort to remove additional trees that pose a potential threat to BPA's primary high voltage transmission lines;
- worked with the National Marine Fisheries Service to temporarily curtail fish operations at The Dalles Dam (the temporary curtailment enables the dam to generate more power to serve emergency needs for power in the West);
- initiated a review with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to understand the loss of the McNary generators and to prevent their loss in the event of a future disturbance; and
- begun work on a request from the Secretary of Energy to all power marketing agencies to review reliability issues.

Randy Hardy, BPA CEO stated, "We are dealing with a real-time emergency in which we are working

to prevent blackouts in California. This is a matter of public health and human safety. California is expecting to see record temperatures for the next couple of days. They've lost two major generators that serve their area and they are calling on the Northwest for help. The measures we're taking are prudent in this emergency and, as far as the additional generation at The Dalles Dam is concerned, it's temporary.”

By Monday, Aug. 12, BPA already had taken some measures to ensure its system could handle any future contingencies. According to Hardy, tree trimming crews had been dispatched and as many as 300 trees that posed a threat to power lines had either been pruned or cut down. Helicopters were out patrolling lines in search of potential trouble spots and by Monday, more than 700 miles of critical transmission lines had been checked.

“Let me make it clear that no system can be rendered totally fail safe,” Hardy said. “There are literally millions of potential contingencies we have to deal with. But we are taking steps to substantially lessen the probability of another disturbance similar to what we experienced on Aug. 10.”

“WSCC is concerned that in such a short span of time we have experienced two similar incidents caused by vegetation and voltage instability on the western system,” said Dennis Eyre, WSCC executive director. “We are now taking further steps to make this system as reliable as possible. We are trying to learn more about what happened to prevent such a situation from reoccurring in the future. Our Monday meeting demonstrates the commitment of the utility industry's senior management to maintaining reliability.”

In addition to Deputy Secretary of Energy Curtis, meeting attendees included WSCC's Executive Committee, the President of the North American Electric Reliability Council, and senior management personnel from Bonneville Power Administration, Eugene Water & Electric Board, Idaho Power Co., Pacific Gas and Electric Co., PacifiCorp, Portland General Electric Co., Salt River Project, San Diego Gas & Electric Co., Southern California Edison Co., Transmission Agency of Northern California, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Public Utilities Commission, and Oregon Public Utilities Commission.

According to Eyre, a team of industry experts will convene on Friday, Aug. 16, to begin a detailed assessment of the outage and prepare a report of its findings. The report will detail the events of the Aug. 10 disturbance and analyze how the interconnected electric system was operating before the disturbance occurred and as the disturbance unfolded. This analysis includes, but is not limited to, reviews of: the sequence of events surrounding the disturbance, the generation patterns occurring on the system, the scheduled and actual amounts of power flowing on the transmission lines, and how the underfrequency load shedding programs, restoration procedures, and system protection schemes operated. The detailed report will include recommendations for corrective actions and mitigation measures to minimize the potential for future system disturbances. A preliminary report will be available in two to three weeks.

The team includes representatives from Arizona Public Service Co.; Bonneville Power Administration, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power; Pacific Gas and Electric Co., PacifiCorp; San Diego Gas & Electric Co.; Southern California Edison Co.; Western Area Power Administration; and the WSCC staff. Representatives from the Department of Energy and the North American Electric Reliability Council have been invited to participate in the investigation.

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Copies of this press release may be obtained by sending an e-mail message to: maiser@wscc.com. The message should include the line SEND AUGUST13.UUE followed by a blank line. The e-mail version is in WordPerfect 5.1. This press release also is available in on the WSCC homepage at www.wscc.com under the hotlink "News regarding August 10, 1996, Disturbance."
