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Dangerous vandalism near Eugene causes power outage to more 1,000 people and \$6,000 in damages to equipment

Bonneville Power Administration

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EUGENE, Ore. — An investigation is underway following the report of gunshot vandalism Dec. 16 to one of the Bonneville Power Administration's Cougar - Thurston 115kv lines roughly 40 miles east of Eugene.

The vandalism cut service to Lane Electric Co-op and the Eugene Water and Electric Board, resulting in an outage that left more than 1,000 people without power for about one and a half hours.

A maintenance crew was immediately dispatched to the site where it discovered that 50-60 insulators had been severely damaged by gunfire. This incident will cost BPA — and ultimately the region's electricity ratepayers — approximately \$6,000.

"We haven't had one this bad in a long time," said Greg Burbach, a BPA line foreman from the Alvey Substation near Goshen.

After a long stretch of rainy weather in the area, the sunny weather last week may have contributed to this act of vandalism. People rarely commit these senseless acts of violence to BPA property during cold, rainy, overcast weather.

Anyone with further information that could lead to the vandals is encouraged to call BPA's Crime Witness hotline toll-free, 1-800-437-2744. The information may be worth up to \$1,000. Witness' names are kept confidential.

BPA annually spends between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to replace transmission line equipment damaged and destroyed by gunshot vandalism. These figures do not include lost power sales revenue and economic losses to the customer or end user. With these indirect costs factored into this most recent incident, the total cost raises to approximately \$15,000. Unfortunately, these costs are passed on to citizens, customers and ratepayers.

Above and beyond these monetary costs and inconveniences are the disruption of essential services which depend upon a reliable supply of electricity. Fire departments, police and ambulance services and life saving or life support medical equipment are highly dependent on electricity.

Vandals also should consider the dangers and consequences to shooting at power lines. Downed lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages can seriously injure or kill the perpetrators.

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