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Independence Day Vandals Cause Damage to Power Lines

BPA Offers Up to \$1,000 for Information

Bonneville Power Administration

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CHEHALIS, Wash. - While many people enjoyed the sunny, warm weather over the holiday weekend, vandals shot and destroyed insulators along a transmission line outside of Chehalis. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to arrest and conviction of vandals who caused an estimated \$2,500 worth of damage to power lines.

On July 4, at approximately 3:45 p.m., gunmen shot insulators along the Chehalis-Olympia 230,000-volt power line seven miles outside of Chehalis. There are no suspects, but the likely perpetrators are juveniles who enjoy shooting at insulators.

Anyone shooting at power lines for fun should consider the dangers and consequences, said BPA Security Specialist Gail Dreckman. High voltage power lines pose enormous risk to anyone who shoots at them. Downed power lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages can kill or injure the vandals and others in the area.

Unfortunately, the incident caused a power outage to customers of local utilities for approximately an hour. A BPA line crew dispatched to the scene spent more than seven hours repairing the damaged power lines.

BPA annually spends between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to replace insulators damaged or destroyed by gunshot vandalism. These costs get passed on to customers and ratepayers. Above and beyond these monetary costs and inconveniences are the possible disruption of essential services -- fire departments, police and ambulance services -- that depend on reliable electric service.

Under its popular neighborhood watch-style Crime Witness Program, BPA offers cash rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators. Since 1994, the Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of telephone tips resulting in dozens of arrests, recovered property, and most importantly, deterrence of future crime. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744 and their identity will be kept confidential.

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