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NEWS RELEASE:
Vandals cause damage to local power line
BPA offers up to \$1,000 for information

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ASHTON, Idaho — The same sunny, spring weather that has been attracting people to the outdoors has, unfortunately, marked the beginning of the vandalism season. The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of vandals who caused an estimated \$1,300 worth of damage to a transmission line near Ashton in an area that has experienced repeated acts of vandalism over the past couple of years.

On April 9, a BPA transmission line maintenance crew was notified of trouble on the Goshen-Drummond 115,000-volt power line. A BPA helicopter patrol quickly surveyed the damage and confirmed that 11 out of 12 insulators had been destroyed by gun shot along a transmission located approximately four miles southwest of the Drummond Substation. There are no suspects, but the likely perpetrators are young adults who enjoy shooting insulators.

"Anyone shooting at power lines for fun should consider the dangers and consequences," explained 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."

Fortunately, there was no disruption of electrical service to customers. BPA used alternative pathways to deliver power while crews spent more than six hours repairing the line. Had this incident resulted in power interruption to BPA customers, costs would have been significantly higher.

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.

The Crime Witness Program was created by BPA in 1994 as a cost-effective way to involve the public in combating crimes that could potentially cause power outages. Through its neighborhood watch-style 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, thousands of dollars of recovered property and, most importantly, deterrence of future crime. For example, in 1997, a total of 237 insulator units were replaced, representing an 82% decrease from the 1,313 units replaced in 1996. Cumulative savings since the program began totals more than \$600,000. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744 and their identity will be kept confidential.

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