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NEWS RELEASE:
Vandals bring down power line -
BPA offers up to \$1,000 for information

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LaPine, Ore. — The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who caused an estimated \$5,000 worth of damage to the power line that connects BPA's system to California.

On Aug. 3 at 5:20 a.m., BPA's Celilo—Sylmar 1000-kilovolt Pacific Direct Current transmission line experienced problems. A motorist who drove over the lines that had dropped to the ground called BPA's Crime Witness Hotline within one hour after the trouble was noticed by system controls. BPA immediately dispatched a transmission line maintenance crew and helicopter to the scene located about 70 miles south of LaPine, Ore. The Lakeview Sheriff's Office kept motorists away from the downed lines until the transmission crew was able to move them.

The BPA crew found that upon arrival 20 insulators had been shot out. Electrical service to Los Angeles Department of Water & Power was interrupted briefly until BPA could perform switching operations to bypass the problem.

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 percent 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.

BPA, a federal power marketing agency, is the Northwest's largest electricity provider. The agency is responsible for selling the power produced by 29 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin. It owns and operates the nation's largest transmission system totaling 15,012 circuit miles long.

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