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## *BPA will pay for information about crime*

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**PORTLAND, Ore.** – The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who have vandalized the power system in western Montana.

On Sept. 25, BPA's Garrison-Taft 500-kilovolt transmission line was out of service for more than 10 hours because of gun shot vandalism on the power system. This incident was located just west of Missoula, Mont., near Albert Creek.

On Sept. 18 and 19, BPA's Columbia Falls-Trego 115-kilovolt line was out of service for over seven hours. This interruption of service was required in order to replace insulators damaged from rifle fire. Approximately 10,000 customers were without power. The vandalism causing these outages occurred at two locations. One vandalism site was about 3 to 4 miles west of Whitefish just off of Highway 93. The other site was just west of the aluminum plant in Columbia Falls.

A third incident occurred on Sept. 11, when BPA's Dworshak-Taft 500-kilovolt line was out of service for more than 10 hours. Again, this incident was the result of gun shot vandalism. This incident took place about 27 miles south of Taft, Mont.

A series of incidents over the last two years has occurred on BPA's Libby-Conkelley 250-kilovolt line near Columbia Falls. In these incidents, the vandals have been targeting the overhead transmission line conductors as well as the insulators.

Vandalism on this line can jeopardize service to the Columbia Falls area and the aluminum plant.

These serious vandalism incidents coincide with the fall hunting season and relatively good weather. The costs of vandalism get passed on to ratepayers in their utility bills. These cumulative costs over the years add up to millions of dollars.

An additional problem with vandalism of this type is the danger of electrocution of the vandal and others in the area. This vandalism could also start a forest fire if the conductor wire is separated from the tower and brought to the ground.

Because of the seriousness of these incidents, BPA is offering a reward of up to \$1000. Informants can call toll free **1-800-437-2744**, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The identity of informants is kept strictly confidential.

BPA's Crime Witness Program was created 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 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators.

The program has resulted in a favorable downward trend in the number of insulator units replaced. 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. Estimated savings since the program began totals more than \$1,500,000.

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