



Vandals remain at large; BPA seeking information on toppled tower

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Bonneville Power Administration

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BEND, Ore. – Vandals who toppled a high voltage transmission tower two days before New Year's Day are still at large. Meanwhile, Northwest ratepayers will foot the bill for the incident unless the vandals are caught. The incident has cost BPA approximately \$126,000.

BPA is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals. No one lost power during the incident, but it did give the Northwest the distinction of being the only transmission grid in the nation that had a major incident during the year 2000 rollover.

The incident occurred near where BPA's transmission line crosses U.S. Highway 20, approximately 37 miles southeast of Bend, Ore., and 14 miles northeast of Brothers, Ore. The Deschutes County Sheriff, Oregon State Patrol and Federal Bureau of Investigation all are involved in the investigation.

"The power system operated as it's designed to operate during an incident like this," said Mike Berg, BPA security specialist. "Still, the ratepayers didn't get away from this incident without a cost. Each and every Northwest ratepayer is on the hook for the cost to fix that tower and put the line back in service."

BPA estimates the total cost of the incident to be \$125,197. This includes \$92,397.54 in foregone revenue as well as a \$32,800 price tag for tower and line repairs.

While ratepayers will not see their power bills increase because of this incident, Berg says they shouldn't rest easy.

"This is the reason why information on who did this is important," Berg said. "If we can apprehend these individuals and convict them, they wind up paying the bill instead of the ratepayers."

That's exactly what happened on Jan. 26, 2000 when a judge ordered teenagers accused of knocking out a BPA power line near Cascade Locks last fall to repay nearly \$9,000 in repair costs to the agency. An anonymous informant turned in the teenagers. That informant received a \$500 dollar reward.

"The Bend-area incident is much more serious, and we're serious about apprehending the people responsible and making them pay," Berg said. "If anyone has information about this incident, I

personally urge them to call our Crime Witness Hot Line. Our offer of up to a \$10,000 reward still stands."

Calls to BPA's Crime Witness Hot Line are toll free and confidential. The number is **1-800-437-2744**. Anonymous calls can also be made to the following agencies:

FBI Bend (541) 389-1202

Deschutes County Sheriff (541) 388-0170

Oregon State Police (503) 375-3555

FBI Portland (503) 552-5346

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. Since then, the Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of telephone tips resulting in dozens of arrests and nearly \$3,000,000 in savings in the form of recovered property, restitution and reduced vandalism.

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