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## ***BPA offers new \$10,000 reward for vandalism near Westport, Ore.***

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

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**PORTLAND, Ore.** – Bonneville Power Administration is offering \$10,000, ten times the normal reward amount, for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for another act of vandalism that, this time shut down a Westport, Ore. paper mill for two hours.

Vandals shot out insulators on a BPA high voltage transmission line causing an outage at Fort James Paper Mill near Westport, Ore. on Feb. 23. The outage forced the mill to shut down costing Fort James \$250,000 to \$500,000. Approximately 900 employees 1600 other Clatskanie County PUD Customers were also affected.

"This vandalism is the most costly in my memory," reported Gail Dreckman, security specialist for BPA. "It's Costly to BPA, costly to the PUD, and exceedingly costly to the Fort James Mill and it's employees. A single act of vandalism usually runs between \$6,000 to \$8,000. Because of the huge loss on this case, we felt it was necessary to substantially increase the reward amount. These vandals need to be caught."

The affected transmission line runs parallel to U.S. Highway 30 on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, passing close to the communities of Clatskanie, Westport, and Svenson Junction. Switching operations restored service to Clatskanie PUD in approximately 2 hours. BPA's transmission line was out of service for approximately 17 hours while crews made repairs. Costs to Clatskanie PUD has not been determined.

When a vandalism incident causes a loss of load to a customer and to electricity end users, the indirect costs resulting from the power outage and shut downs can be significantly greater than the direct costs of repairing the damaged transmission lines. The direct costs for these repairs will get passed on to ratepayers. The burden of the indirect costs falls upon the end users, in this case upon the plant owners and workers.

This is the second time this year BPA offered a \$10,000 reward. In January, BPA offered a similar reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for toppling a transmission tower in Southeastern Oregon. Those perpetrators remain at large.

According to Dreckman, "Anyone foolish enough to risk shooting at power lines is taking a huge risk.

Down lines can cause ground voltages that can kill or seriously injure the vandals themselves. They can also start fires, which is a particular concern during periods of dry weather and in heavily forested areas."

Since 1994, BPA's Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of tips resulting in dozens of arrests and thousands of dollars of recovered property, and most importantly, deterrence of future crime. In 1999, a total of 202 insulator units were replaced, representing an 88 percent decrease from the historic average of 1723 units replaced each year prior to the institution of the program. Cumulative savings since the program began totals more than \$2,000,000. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744. The identity of informants is kept strictly confidential.

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