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Vandals shoot out power line insulators near Shelton; BPA offers up to \$1,000 for information

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Bonneville Power Administration

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SHELTON, Wash. — The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who damaged a power line three miles north of Shelton, just off Mason Lake Road. The damage is estimated at more than \$2,000.

No one lost electric service, but this is the second such incident in the area in less than a month. In this incident, vandals shot out 46 insulators on a BPA 230,000-volt line, Aug. 19. It took five hours to repair the line.

"An increase in this type of vandalism is expected when the weather is warm and sunny. However, this is a particularly serious situation due to the high voltages carried by this line and the number of people using the area for recreation," reported Jeff Millenor, security specialist for BPA. "If a high voltage power line falls to the ground, the resulting charge in the ground can cause electrocution of those in the area as far away as 100 feet or more."

Vandalism accounts for millions of dollars in damage to the Northwest power system each year. These costs are passed on to customers and ratepayers. Losing electric service for some can be a life-or-death situation says Millenor. Outages can potentially cause disruption of essential services — fire departments, police and ambulance services — that depend on electricity.

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 important, deterrence of future crime. In 1999, 202 insulators were replaced; representing an 88 percent decrease from the historic average of 1,723 units replaced each year before the program began. Ratepayers have saved more than \$2 million because of this program. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744. The identity of informants is kept strictly confidential.

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