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High voltage line near Kelso damaged by vandals, reward offered

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Bonneville Power Administration

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KELSO, Wash. — The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who damaged a 230,000 volt power line located off of Hazeldale Road just north of Kelso. The damage is estimated at more than \$3,000. No one lost service, but this is a very serious situation due to the current power demands the Northwest is experiencing.

"In the last month, the transmission system has been operating at full power due to the cold weather. This type of vandalism puts the Northwest at risk," reported Jeff Millenor, security specialist for BPA. "Not only could it leave folks without power, but shooting at power lines is also dangerous to folks in the area. 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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