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Vandals destroy insulators BPA offers reward

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Bonneville Power Administration

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CONTACTS: [Jeffrey Millenor](#), BPA (503) 230-3103

Ravensdale, Wash. – The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of vandals who damaged two BPA high-voltage power lines east of Ravensdale in the Maple Valley area of Washington. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744. The identity of informants is kept strictly confidential.

On June 5 and 6, vandals shot out several strings of insulators on two 500,000-volt power lines. BPA line maintenance personnel took the power lines out of service and replaced the insulators at a cost of about \$10,000.

In the state of Washington, vandalism that affects public utilities is a class B felony punishable by confinement in a state correctional institution for up to 10 years or by a fine not to exceed \$20,000, or both.

"This is a particularly serious situation due to the very high voltages carried by this line," explained Jeffrey 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."

Vandalism accounts for millions of dollars in damage to the Northwest power system each year. These costs get passed on to customers and ratepayers. Beyond these monetary costs and inconveniences is the possible disruption of essential services – fire, police and medical services that depend on reliable electricity.

Since 1994, BPA's Crime Witness program has generated hundreds of tips resulting in dozens of arrests, thousands of dollars of recovered property and, most important, deterrence of future crime. In 1999, BPA replaced 202 insulator units, an 88 percent decrease from the historic average of 1,723 units a year. Cumulative savings since the program began total more than \$2,000,000.

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