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Vera Water & Power steps up to help region

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Bonneville Power Administration

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VERADALE, Wash. – The Bonneville Power Administration and Vera Water & Power signed an agreement on June 13 that will reduce the utility's demand on BPA by 10 percent for one year starting in October 2001. Vera, located in Washington's Spokane valley, is the first public utility in the region that is served exclusively by BPA to commit to the agency's 10 percent load reduction goal.

"We at Vera are committed to doing everything that we can to help minimize this fall's expected BPA rate increase," explained Kevin Wells, Vera's general manager. "Triple-digit rate increases would cause devastating lifestyle-altering changes to our low income and elderly customers, and we must avoid that any way possible. Entering into the 10 percent load reduction agreement, including market power purchases, was the right thing for our utility to do to help with this process."

Steve Wright, BPA's acting administrator, praised the board's commitment, saying, "Vera Water & Power has taken an important step toward load reduction. It is helping reduce the rate increase planned for Oct. 1 and is helping ensure economic stability in its community. Vera is doing its part, and we hope that other utilities will do the same within the next eight days."

Beginning in October, Vera Water & Power will reduce its load on BPA by 2.4 average megawatts, or 10 percent of its total load. Wells said that the reduction will be made up with the purchase of energy from the open market under BPA's innovative "Chase" plan. Under the plan, BPA will purchase blocks of power on the market, then resell and deliver the power to its customers as they need it.

"Negotiations are ongoing with all our customer groups," said Wright. "We hope that our recent load reduction agreements with other customers and now with Vera Water & Power will encourage additional commitments – and soon."

On June 6, BPA announced that the region's federal electricity system is headed for wholesale rate increases of 150 percent or more beginning October 1 unless its industrial and utility customers make additional commitments to reduce energy use by the agency's June 22 deadline.

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