

January 7, 2009

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An Open Letter to Our Customers:

The last few weeks have brought weather to Columbia County that we will all remember for some time. Many of you have said you cannot recall such a snowfall since the winter of 1968-69. During these recent storms our employees have once again proved their strong commitment to serving you. In the utility business, customers frequently come before family, and many of our employees worked day and night restoring power through both Christmas and New Years.

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**Board of
Directors**

David Baker
Carol Everman
Darrel Purkerson
Richard Simpson
Loren Tarbell

◆
General Manager

Kevin P. Owens, P.E.

The "Arctic Blast" that began December 14th started out manageable by all accounts. After repairing a few outages for our customers, our linemen went to help West Oregon Electric Cooperative who suffered widespread outages on their system. Then the weather warmed on Christmas Eve and the snow turned very heavy, bringing down limbs and trees into our electric system. Our crews worked as fast as possible to repair the lines, but just as quickly as they would restore power, more trees and limbs would fall and the lights would go out again. It was nearly impossible to get ahead of the outages. Many roads were impassable, our line trucks became stuck several times, and we broke set after set of tire chains. Restoring service under these circumstances was very tedious and created extreme fatigue for our crews who were

working 18 or more hours a day. On December 26th, Clatskanie PUD and Clark PUD sent crews to assist us. This was a tremendous help.

When the storm passed the lights were back on, our crews had responded to 140 separate outages affecting about 13,000 customers. The average length was four hours but the longest outage, which affected four customers, lasted nearly five days. The largest outage affected 2,212 customers. Thirty seven outages affected less than 10 customers.

It may be hard to fathom right now, but this storm could have been much worse for our customers. We invest over \$500,000 per year in tree trimming to keep trees and limbs away from our distribution lines. The Board-approved budget for 2009 increases that amount another \$100,000. Our investments in preventative maintenance pay dividends during these weather-related events.

The cost of this storm will easily exceed \$150,000. By comparison, the hurricane winds and rain that swept through Northwest Oregon in December



2007 caused the PUD \$20,000 in damages. The PUD maintains a reserve fund as part of its financial strategy to pay for events like this without affecting customer rates.

Many of our customers were prepared for this storm and showed incredible ingenuity in keeping warm, cooking on wood stoves, relying on home generators and keeping food chilled in snow banks. Unfortunately others were not as prepared. In the Pacific Northwest, extreme weather conditions such as high winds, freezing rains and heavy wet snow should be expected. We all know it will happen; it's just a matter of when. We have a long winter season still ahead and I encourage you to take time to be prepared for the next incident. If you live in an area where access might be limited, consider a properly installed home generator with a transfer switch. Store emergency food and supplies. Develop "warm room" strategies to keep confined areas in your home warmer than others. Develop a family 72-hour emergency kit with food, water, medical prescriptions and other supplies. Critical care situations should have well defined support networks in place. The American Red Cross has a number of resources available to help you plan for emergency situations. To learn more visit www.oregonredcross.org or call 503-528-5665.

I also remind you that it is critically important to stay away from downed power lines. Always assume that any downed line is "live" and could electrocute you. Keep at least 50 feet away from it, don't drive over it and don't touch anything near it. Call us immediately at (503) 397-1844.

Our 10 crew members worked 2,753 hours during the past three weeks and our management and office staff provided over 400 hours of holiday, weekend and after-hours telephone support. My employees and I spoke with many of you. Your thoughts, prayers and kind words were most appreciated by everyone here at the PUD. I cannot thank you enough for the patience, tolerance and goodwill you have shown over the last few weeks. It has been extremely tough on many of you and we all understand that.

Sincerely,



Kevin P. Owens, P.E.
General Manager

