

Wind Storm Turns Lights Out

By Brandi Meech

December 14, 2006 was a dark night for more than 5,000 Klickitat PUD customers. A major wind storm swept through the county, knocking down trees and power lines, and sending KPUD crews scrambling to restore power to the residents as quickly as possible.

KPUD received its first phone call at approximately 6:45 p.m. with reports of outages in the Trout Lake area. When the White Salmon crews were dispatched, they found power lines down on Highway 141, resulting in the closure of the highway for more than a day.

By 8 p.m. reports of power outages came in all across the western portion of the county, including Gilmer, Glenwood and Snowden. White Salmon Branch Manger Ron Schultz began organizing crews and engineering staff to deal with the widespread outages. Office personnel were called in to answer phones and remained on 24-hour rotating shifts until power was restored.

Soon the entire area served by the Bingen Substation was without power due to a PP&L transmission line going out in Powerdale. With the amount of outages reported across Oregon and Washington, PP&L was unable to immediately respond.

Ron began planning an alternative to regain power in the area.

Ron Ihrig, Klickitat PUD operations manager, was called for additional support to the White Salmon area, only to find out the Goldendale crews were also experiencing transmission outages. He began calling in all available crews and promised to send help to the White Salmon area as soon as men became available.

As the situation progressed, crews began patrolling lines and realized that not only did power to the substations need to be restored, fallen trees and downed lines in the



Above, KPUD crews worked day and night to rebuild damaged poles and equipment and restore power caused by the severe windstorm in December.

area compounded the situation.

Problems continued into the night, including the loss of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) transmission. BPA's operator was sent to Bald Mountain, and repairs were completed by 3 a.m. on the morning of the 15th.

With this repair, crews were able to back-feed power from the Bald Mountain Substation to the Bingen Substation and restore power to White Salmon's Skyline Hospital and Rhine Village, then Bingen and SDS.

Crews worked through the night to repair damaged lines and re-energize substations. With the magnitude of damage, Ron Ihrig called for mutual aid assistance from other Washington utilities. However, with outage problems statewide due to extreme weather conditions, help was not available.

Northern Wasco PUD in Oregon was contacted. Two line crews

and one tree crew were dispatched to assist in restoring power.

When daylight finally came on the 15th, the crews could see the amount of destruction the wind had caused. There was extensive damage in the Trout Lake, Laurel, Glenwood and Gilmer areas, and a transmission line from Husum to Glenwood was down due to trees.

Crews were dispatched to the areas in order of severity.

Power was restored to White Salmon by the early morning hours on the 16th, but crews were still working in the Laurel, Glenwood, Trout Lake and Waubish Avenue area, and repairing the Glenwood Transmission line.

Two other transmission structures were destroyed in the Oak Ridge area, and access to the area was limited.

Crews were finally able to begin

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