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WA-18

Spirited Effort Repairs Storm Damage

Well, we don't want to do that again anytime soon. Mother Nature appeared to have been blessing us with the gift of a mild winter, but on January 18 she began to take it all back.

In the space of seven days, we had wet snow, a hard freeze, icy rain, a silver thaw, more snow and then significant winds. Trees finally gave out, taking our power lines down with them.



The damage area was significant and spread across the entire county, with lines tearing down as fast as we put them up. The towns of Glenwood and Trout Lake were out of power for five days, and some customers for up to nine days.

We were not the only ones hit. The Bonneville Power Administration and Pacific Power also lost transmission lines that serve Klickitat PUD.

Our response to the storm damage was to reorganize our crews, add additional crews from neighboring PUDs, bring back retirees and involve local excavation contractors.

The logistics of supplying 17 crews was immense. Employees answered phones 24/7, supplying materials, guiding visiting construction crews, organizing contractors to open up access to our lines and dig pole holes in ice and snow, as well as feeding and lodging our fellow PUD crews who assisted us.

KPUD, Klickitat County and Gov. Chris Gregoire have declared an emergency.

Our preliminary estimate of the cost of repairs due to this outage is close to \$2 million.

We are applying for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding, although there is no guarantee FEMA will fund all of our costs. Given the economic conditions we have talked about during the past year or two, this easily could create rate pressures. We will keep you informed as we work through the process.

There is no way to properly thank all of those who rose to the occasion, but there are a few I would like to single out: Klickitat County Emergency Services, American Red Cross, Klickitat County Road Department, the sheriff's office, Jonah Ministries, the media for broadcasting and printing outage updates, and all of our customers who plowed roads, helped with access and provided us with valuable information.

I also hope you recognize the efforts of your KPUD employees—not just for the 16 to 18 hours of work each day, but for spending those hours working to restore your power. They might not have had power at their homes either, but they were still out working for you.

Some who are the most deserving of thanks often are overlooked. They are the people who took the time to look in on a neighbor, offer shelter, cook a meal, shovel snow or offer help in any of a thousand ways. To those, I say, "Thank you." You embody the very founding principles and spirit of PUDs: neighbors serving the needs of neighbors.

Randy L. Knowles
KPUD Commissioner, District 1