

# Keeping Each Other Safe

*Annual pole-top rescue training keeps linemen's rescue skills sharp*

By Beth Schroder

Everyone likes to think they are prepared for an emergency. Those who are most prepared are the ones who practice the skills needed in emergencies.

The crews at Klickitat PUD take this to heart. Each year, KPUD line crews, construction crews and the tree-trimming crew practice skills that could save a co-worker's life.

During the 2018 annual pole-top rescue training in July, employees improved their skills by rescuing "Joe" from a utility pole. In the case of the tree crew, it was a tree-top rescue.

Joe is a simulated victim placed in pole-climbing gear and attached to a power pole. Joe may have suffered a heart attack, stroke, contact with an electrical line or some other issue.

KPUD Serviceman Tim Garrigus spoke about the process that employees go through during the training exercise.

"You never perform the rescue until 911 has been called and emergency help is on the way," Tim says.

The rescuer asks for an automated external defibrillator to be available near the pole. Having an AED on hand helps if the victim has no pulse once they reach the ground.

The rescuing lineman climbs the pole and gets into position.

"At this point, you determine what resources are necessary," Tim says. "As a lineman, you are expected to use your normal equipment to do the rescue."

Linemen are required to have a handline attached to the power pole when doing work at the pole-top level.

"The handline is generally used to pass tools and materials up and down the pole, but it can be used in an emergency to help in getting an injured lineman back to the ground," says KPUD Operations Manager Mark Pritchard.

Once the lineman climbs the pole, he uses the hot stick—referred to as the shotgun by linemen—to remove the electrical connection between the energized source and the work zone to make it safe to perform a rescue, Tim says.

Next, the handline is tied around the victim to secure him to be lowered from the pole. The next step is cutting the skid from the victim. The skid attaches to the climbing gear a lineman



**Klickitat PUD Serviceman Tim Garrigus explains the equipment used by linemen during pole top rescue training. This is the same gear they wear during normal pole top work.**

wears and then goes around the pole. Cutting the skid frees the injured lineman from the pole.

Joe is then lowered to the ground using the handline. The goal of pole top rescue training is to get the injured lineman off the pole and to the ground as quickly and safely as possible, Tim says. By achieving this, other linemen or rescue personnel can perform lifesaving measures.

He adds that while the pole-top rescue training is vital for Klickitat PUD crews, the best work they do is by following established safety policies and procedures each day to make sure everyone arrives home safely. ■



**Clockwise from top, Klickitat PUD crew members get a briefing from safety expert John Spain. Lineman Justen Greenwood works to rescue "Joe" from the pole top. Tree Trimmer Bobby Koffler uses similar rescue techniques to get Joe to the ground from a tree. Apprentice Lineman Robert Dorais uses a hot stick to disconnect the electrical current so he can rescue Joe from the pole.**

