

HOT WIRE

Regulation, technical and policy issues for Oregon Co-ops

November 2009

PUC Working to Improve Safety Near Overhead Lines

A PUC Committee comprised of utility and state agency representatives are evaluating how best to “add teeth” to the Oregon Overhead Line Safety Act. The PUC has become increasingly concerned about the number of contacts (or near contacts) with overhead lines (12 in the last 17 months). The Committee is considering how to have utilities notified earlier in the building permitting process to determine if there is adequate clearance from power lines and how to get buy-in from builders, developers and other groups that are critical to the process. The PUC Work Group hopes to make a recommendation by spring 2010.

BPA Launches New Energy Saving Projects for Distribution System Efficiencies

BPA will hold seven workshops to seek input from utilities and interest groups in creating a program for achieving efficiencies through voltage reduction on distribution systems. About 35 utilities and 80 people attended the first meetings. BPA will send out draft thresholds and hold more workshops throughout the region in the next couple of months. Jillian Welker, BPA Consultant, discussed the proposed program and public involvement activities at the October ORECA E&O meeting.

ODOE Cranks Down BETC Payments In early November, ODOE announced new rules to tighten areas of the program that have become problematic for ODOE including paying out way more in tax credits (\$160 million) than originally projected (\$1.7 million). The rule changes are designed to eliminate the practice of multiple applications for the same projects, establish new criteria for project eligibility, enhance the ability to revoke, suspend and/or put conditions on applications, and to establish new criteria for performance standards.

The Governor directed ODOE to apply safeguards and to control the cost of the BETC program. ODOE hopes to make more deliberate decisions about projects and stop draining funds from State’s General Fund *while* continuing to encourage the development of renewable energy. ODOE expects to hold a public meeting on the rulemaking on March 30, 2010 and file permanent rules on April 29, 2010.

Important Dates

Nov 12, WCI Session on Leakage and Competitiveness Issues
Nov 18, WCI Partners meeting, Santa Fe, NM
Dec 7-8 NW Environmental Conference, Portland Janzen Beach Red Lion
Dec 17 WCI Shareholders call on electric imports default numbers

Other News

WCI Gives A Nod to National Cap & Trade Plan In September, WCI sent a letter to the US Senate in support of an “aggressive and cost-effective” national cap and trade plan while protecting state authority to create a complementary plan with the national one. WCI also encouraged Congress to: 1) limit offsets, 2) reward early action (but doesn’t define it), and 3) supports a variety of technologies including carbon capture and sequestration.

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