

Media release

COWLITZ COUNTY PUD

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Most PUD Customers to Receive a Bill Credit in the Coming Weeks

Cowlitz PUD received \$14.66 million from the Bonneville Power Administration last week and will return the money to customers during a one-month billing cycle beginning April 14. The PUD Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to distribute the funds via a billing credit.

Overall BPA is returning \$336 million in interim payments to wholesale customers across the Pacific Northwest, which is money BPA collected through wholesale power rates since October 2006 to fund the Residential Exchange Program (REP). The REP is used to distribute NW hydro benefits to residential and small farm customers of investor-owned utilities (IOUs) like Portland General Electric. A Federal court has ruled that the REP was improperly funded.

“This will put dollars back into the hands of our customers today, while we continue to work with BPA and other utilities on a long-term resolution to the Residential Exchange Program,” PUD Board President Buz Ketcham said.

The billing credit will be extended to PUD customers who had an active account as of April 2, 2008 (the day BPA returned the money), and who were also signed up for PUD service for any-or-all of the period from October 2006 to September 2007. The credit is based on each customer’s total electric usage in that 12-month period.

Thirty PUD industrial customers will share about 78 percent of the returned funds. That group combined to purchase 78 percent of the power the PUD sold from October 2006 to September 2007. Because of the size of their credits, each of the 30 industrial customers will be sent a refund check.

All remaining customers who qualify for a return will receive a billing credit. “Any customer who qualifies — schools, churches, banks, stores, offices or a residential customers — will receive the credit if they meet the qualifications,” PUD Spokesman Dave Andrew said. “One person might see a credit of \$60 on their bill, while their neighbor’s credit might be \$25. It all comes down to usage. The more you overpaid in the first place, the more you get back.”

When the BPA payment was first announced in February, Cowlitz PUD considered sending refund checks to all qualified customers. “The Board originally suggested sending all our customers a check. But once we sat down and considered all the logistics of preparing and mailing over 50,000 refund checks, it was obvious that a billing credit was the more practical and most cost-efficient approach,” Andrew said.

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