



CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 14, No. 3

Order a Free Home Energy-Saving Kit

Cowlitz PUD has just launched a special energy conservation program to help you reduce your electric and water usage.

On request, Cowlitz PUD will send customers a FREE energy-saving kit, including two Energy Star[®] rated Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) and one or two energy-saving showerhead(s).

To order, and for additional information, go online to www.cowlitzpud.org and follow the link from our home page. There's a limit of one kit per household and you can expect it to take 7-10 business days for the kit to arrive.

If you do not have web access call 1-888-553-7467 to order your kit. When you call make sure to have a copy of your PUD bill, as you will be asked to provide your premise (prem.) number.

By using energy-efficient products you will reduce your impact on the environment and lower your electric bill:

CFLs

- Lighting accounts for up to 20 percent of your home's total energy use.
- CFLs use 75 percent less energy, and can last up to ten times longer than standard incandescent light bulbs.



- Inside This Issue:**
- February Board Report
 - Auditorium Name Honors John Searing
 - Anti-Fraud Coalition Shred Day

- Use the 4:1 ratio when replacing incandescent bulbs with CFLs. For instance, the 18-watt CFL in the kit will replace a standard 75-watt incandescent bulb.
- The electricity to run a 75-watt light bulb for four hours per day every day, costs you \$6.05 a year.
- The same light fixture with an 18-watt CFL costs \$1.47 per year for electricity. You can see that CFLs provide an easy way to cut your electric use.

ENERGY-SAVING SHOWERHEADS



- Energy-saving showerheads dispense water at a rate of 2.0 gallons per minute (GPM) or lower.
- Energy-saving showerheads limit the amount of water flow from the showerhead. That reduces the amount of water used and decreases the amount of energy needed to heat the water.
- Using a showerhead with a flow rate of 2.0 GPM or less can make your hot water last longer.
- Using one energy-saving showerhead in your home can reduce your electric bill \$20 or more a year.

Don't miss out on this free offer from Cowlitz PUD and start saving electricity right away.

PUD Auditorium Named in Honor of John Searing

In tribute to his 24 years of service as a Cowlitz PUD Commissioner, the public auditorium at the PUD's main office in Longview is now known as John Searing Auditorium.

At its meeting on February 22 the PUD Board honored Searing, the only Cowlitz PUD Commissioner to serve four, six-year terms (1977-1982 and 1989-2006).



Searing was present for the ceremony, where he was joined by the PUD board, staff members, family and several members of the public. "I appreciate this honor very much. I miss serving as a PUD commissioner," Searing said.

PUD Board Vice President Buz Ketcham made the presentation, recognizing Searing for his "courteous and gracious manner and his desire to listen to and interact with PUD customers."

"We appreciate John's outstanding contributions for 24 years to Cowlitz PUD, the Washington PUD Association and the community," Ketcham said.

A plaque recognizing Searing for his service will be placed inside the auditorium, along with a sign outside the building identifying it as John Searing Auditorium.

The auditorium opened in 1998, as part of a PUD expansion project. It can accommodate up to 120 people and is available for use by non-profit groups whose meetings are open to the public.

RECYCLE THAT OLD REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER YOU DON'T REALLY NEED... AND EARN \$30!

To find out if you qualify:
JACO Environmental
(877) 577-0510
or www.cowlitzpud.org



Our Meter Readers Appreciate a Clear Path

By mid-2012 Cowlitz PUD will launch its new automated meter reading system. Until that time, we will continue to send meter readers just like we have since the 1940s.

Each day PUD meter readers travel to every corner of Cowlitz County. They know every street, house and yard from Cougar to Ryderwood. Nearly everyday they encounter situations that prevent them from reaching a meter, including:

- **METERS BEHIND A LOCKED DOOR OR GATE:**
Please leave your gate open when your meter is due for reading or call the PUD and make arrangements to provide us with a key. All customer keys are stored securely in a vault in our office and only leave the vault on the day your meter is to be read.
- **OBSTACLES BLOCKING THE PATH TO A METER:**
Shrubby, vehicles, sports and lawn equipment, or any item stacked or stored near your meter can present a problem. We appreciate a clear path.
- **DOGS IN THE YARD AND NOT ON A LEASH:**
A family dog left outside to protect your property considers a meter reader to be an intruder. When your meter is due to be read, please have your dog on a leash or inside the house or garage.

You can determine future meter reading dates by referring to the current and previous "read dates" on the enclosed bill. Meters are read every 26-34 days. Clear access to each meter helps us stay on schedule, and provides for a more timely and accurate billing. Thank you in advance, we appreciate your help.

Go Green!

You can support the development of environmentally friendly "Green Power" sources like wind, solar, low-impact hydro, geothermal and biomass. The cost is as low as \$40 a year and may be tax deductible.

1. Log on to www.cowlitzpud.org
2. Go to the **Conservation and Renewables** menu
3. Click on **Purchase Green Tags**



What's Happening

HULDA KLAGER LILAC GARDENS "LILAC DAYS"

April 16 through May 8

Open DAILY 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Come stroll four acres of blooming lilacs, with exotic tree plantings and vast shrub and perennial plantings. Admission is \$2, with kids under 12 free, if accompanied by an adult.

The Gardens have been a long standing beloved attraction in Cowlitz County for decades. The Victorian home (built in the late 1880s) and the nearly four acres of blooming lilacs are not only on the historic registry, but also a beautiful, relaxing and fun place to tour.

It's located at 115 South Pekin Road, Woodland, WA. Take exit #21 off Interstate 5 and follow the signs. More information: www.lilacgardens.com or (360) 225-8996

LONGVIEW STAGEWORKS PRESENTS: PETER PAN

April 29-30 & May 1

The Columbia Theatre (Longview)

www.longviewstageworks.com

Each month Cowlitz PUD offers this space to a non-profit group in Cowlitz County as an avenue to promote its activities (on a first-come, first-served basis). Send your request to: whathappening@cowlitzpud.org.

Working Together To Prevent Fraud

Cowlitz PUD is a member of the Anti-Fraud Coalition (AFC) of Cowlitz County.

AFC is a non-profit organization that promotes and encourages the sharing of information between law enforcement and the private sector of our community, involving the fraudulent criminal misuse of checks, credit cards or other related white-collar crimes. It also assists members in the identification of person(s) and schemes which promote fraudulent criminal activity.

Since 2004 the Coalition has worked effectively to educate the public on how to fight back and serves as a local clearinghouse of fraud information for our community. The Coalition has become a trusted and credible anti-fraud force, thanks to its diversity.

Commission Activities



February 2011 highlights:

- **Met with representatives of Columbia Grid** to get an update on grid planning and development in the Pacific Northwest.
- **Approved revisions to policies** that address Economic Development, Line Extensions and Compensation for Employees Not Covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- **Accepted the work completed by JH Kelly of Longview** as part of the rebuild of the Seventh Avenue Substation in Longview.

Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, March 22

Tuesday, April 12

Tuesday, April 26

These public meetings are held in the PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue in Longview at 2:00 p.m. Please check our website for up-to-the-minute Board agendas, meeting dates and times.

Members must be organizations, and active in fraud prevention or detection. By joining the Coalition, members like the PUD receive direct benefits and help support our community and public outreach efforts.

For more information about the Anti-Fraud Coalition of Cowlitz County and how to become a member visit <http://afcofcowlitzcounty.webs.com> or contact Paula Timmons at 360.636.9208 or ptimmons@columbiabank.com

AFC Shred Day Event

Friday, April 22nd, 2011

10am – 3pm

Safeway (2930 Ocean Beach Hwy)

Cost: Free

Food or cash donations accepted for CAP



From the General Manager's Point-of-View...

Each year The Daily News publishes a list of the top-10 salaries for local cities and school districts, the Port of Longview, Cowlitz County, LCC and Cowlitz PUD. Those lists typically draw some attention – and some criticism.



As we enter the third year of a down economy, there seems to be more attention than usual placed on the wages of government workers. We've had questions about how the PUD determines salaries. I'll answer that in my column this month.

First off, we work from a basic concept: Pay a comparable wage for a comparable job for a comparable employer.

It's a fair and simple concept, whether you're talking about wages for school teachers, longshoremen, nurses, pulp and paper workers or the 88 PUD union employees who are members of IBEW Local 77. It's also how we approach setting salaries for 73 Cowlitz PUD non-union employees.

Before 2005 our wages were lagging 10-20 percent or more under market, as we entered an era of heavy retirements among the "baby boom" generation. Our board responded by adopting a salary policy that focused on attracting and retaining quality employees, by paying them within industry standards.

To define our market we participate in a salary survey with 12 other public utilities, all comparable in some way – geographical, size, power sales and/or power generators. Two have more customers than us – Clark County and Eugene. The other 10 have fewer – serving cities like Aberdeen, Tillamook, Moses Lake, Chehalis, Shelton and Port Angeles. Our annual power sales are greater than all 12.

The survey establishes a salary range by job. Our policy then calls for our salaries to fall in the mid-range, within 10 percent up or down. We've mostly accomplished that, although we have more cases that fall short of the mid-range than go above it.

Few PUD customers are familiar with this regional salary survey. However many read the list in The Daily News and

see some PUD salaries are higher than those for cities, counties and schools. That's attributed to supply and demand, which ultimately establishes a labor price in the market.

PUDs in the region compete in the job market with large, private sector utilities like Portland General Electric, Puget Sound Energy and Pacific Power for line workers, engineers, electricians, power resource experts, dispatchers, economists, rate analysts, etc. People with the necessary education and skills are in short supply, even during a soft economy.

So while our salary survey doesn't include large private utilities in the comparison group, their presence in the region influences the job market and the wage levels for the public power industry.

So when our salaries are published in the newspaper without the benefit of a regional perspective within our industry, local critics surface.

We're sensitive to the affects of the three-year downturn in the economy. In 2009 our directors forfeited pay increases. In January 2011 a planned 3.0 percent across-the-board increase was cut to 0.4 percent. Last month the Board cut in-half the potential wage adjustments based on annual performance evaluations.

We've made job reductions and lowered our 2011 labor budget to less than it was in 2010. But when labor costs are just 7.5 percent of our budget, even major job cuts would have a very minimal effect on rates.

We will not lose sight of the value of maintaining a strong work force, so we will continue to pay a wage comparable to what others are earning in similar positions at similar utilities.

Millwrights at Weyerhaeuser and Longview Fibre expect and deserve to earn what their peers earn – here and elsewhere. So do teachers, bus drivers, grocery store checkers and electricians. And so do PUD employees, union and non-union.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Skeahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Brian Skeahan
General Manager

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