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Summer Hours:

OCEC is switching to summer hours
April 1st.
Office hours Monday thru Thursday
7:00 am - 5:30 PM.

Okanogan County Electric Co-op

April 2019 Newsletter

80th Annual Meeting

The 80th OCEC Annual Membership Meeting will be on Monday, April 15th, at the Barn in Winthrop.

Registration begins at 6 PM with the meeting set to begin at 7 PM.

The first 100 memberships to register will receive an OCEC extension cord.

Among the topics of discussion are the Election of three Board positions, an update on electric and propane operations and a presentation of OCEC's new Firewise program.

OCEC's Firewise Program:

OCEC is taking proactive actions with regards to lowering risks of trees outside easements and clear zones getting into our lines and creating an ignition source during red-flag conditions.

This program is influenced by recent fire events in California and is based on programs California utilities have developed to mitigate risks during red-flag conditions. In particular, the program components are:

- Enhanced vegetation management and clearance program. →

- Changing Operational Practices during Red Flag conditions by:
 - Turning off reclosers on all lines (see back page for related article)
 - As a last resort, shutting off power to high risk areas during forecasted windy, red-flag conditions.
- New construction standards in high-risk areas.
- Hardening of existing facilities to fire.
- Outreach to explain program to members.
- Feedback from members

Election for the two open Board positions will be conducted. You should have already received your election package as it was mailed 3/22/19.

The American Legion Auxiliary #120 will be serving pies after the meeting.

Please plan to attend. Your cooperative works best when you have an active staff, an active Board and an active membership!

See you there.

11 Hour Major Outage April 11th - Transmission Update

On April 11th, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) will begin the cutover to the new transmission facilities that will bring transmission redundancy to the Methow Valley. The Twisp substation is currently fed from the new Pateros transmission line and the Winthrop substation is fed from the old Loup line. Once the total project is completed, the loop will be completed and either substation will be able to be fed from either transmission line. Both substations will have redundancy at this point.

As part of the process of finishing the loop and bringing redundancy to the Methow Valley, the work that BPA needs to do will require two outages on the Winthrop Substation. The first outage is the long one and it is currently scheduled for Thursday, April 11th at 7 PM for 11 hours. The scheduled re-energization is Friday, April 12th at 6 AM. Please check our website for possible updates. We will also remind members of this outage through our texting notification system.

The second outage will be needed but has not been scheduled yet.

Members served from the Twisp Substation will not be affected by these outages.

Why Does the Power Blink?

EDITORIAL NOTE: The following article is reprinted with permission from the National Rural Electric Cooperative.
By Scott Turner, P.E.

At one time or another, we've all returned home or woken up late for work to see a blinking "12:00" on our digital alarm clock. You then have to reset every digital clock in your household that doesn't have a battery backup, from the microwave oven to the answering machine. Usually, this state of "eternal midnight" was caused by a "blink" in the electrical system.

While blinks can be annoying, they show that an electrical system is working exactly as designed. And while Okanogan County Electric Cooperative (OCEC) has taken steps to reduce the number of blinks across its power system, there are measures you can take as well.

Let's look at blinks. These momentary power interruptions can occur anywhere along a power system from the time electrons are generated at a power plant to being shipped across transmission lines to substations, or during distribution from a substation to your home.

Why blinks?

Blinks are created when a breaker, or switch, opens along any portion of the power system. The breaker usually opens because of a large, quick rise of electrical current. This large rise, called a fault condition, can occur when a tree branch touches a line, lightning strikes, or a wire breaks.

When this happens, a relay senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the problem site. After opening, the breaker quickly closes. The brief delay, which allows the fault to clear, usually lasts less than two seconds.

If the fault clears, every home or business that receives electricity off that power line has just experienced a blink. This could include thousands of accounts if the breaker protects a transmission line or a substation.

Reducing the blink's effects

Your co-op employs methods to reduce blink frequency. Tree trimming is probably the easiest and most common way, and one area where you can help. Make sure OCEC knows of any trees or limbs located close to a power line. Call 509-996-2228 tell us about potential problems.

Meanwhile, you can reduce the frustration of blinks by purchasing an alarm clock equipped with a battery backup. This type of digital clock offers "ride through" ability for momentary outages. It will also keep the correct time and sound an alarm in case of a long-duration outage, provided a charged battery is in place. As an added benefit, these devices only use the battery in the event of a power interruption.

Blinks affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. If there is a blink while you are operating a computer, your computer may crash and you will have to reboot, hoping all the while that there will be few corrupted files.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on your computer can help prevent information loss. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with a battery backup and provides you some time to save whatever you were working on and exit your computer properly.

The future of blinks

OCEC operates an active system maintenance program and works hard to identify and fix sources of service interruptions. Even though blinks will never disappear from our electrical energy delivery system, by working together with we can minimize effects of the interruptions and the frequency with which they occur.

If you have any questions, please call Operations Manager Glen Huber at 509-996-2228.

This article was written by Scott Turner, P.E., a former electric co-op employee, who is an electrical engineering consultant at his firm JD Engineering, PC, in Hamilton, Mont. (www.jdeng.org).

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