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Okanogan County Electric Co-op

June 2019 Newsletter

OCEC's Special Capital Credit Distribution

OCEC Board of Directors approved a special payout of discounted capital credits for members who are at least 80 years of age.

The current schedule calls for applications to be received in the office by 7/31/19. Distribution is scheduled for August.

Some of the conditions of the program are as follows:

- Maximum amount of special capital credits to be retired by OCEC at this time is \$25,000.
- Member must be a natural person (i.e. only actual person and not a business, LLC, governmental entity, etc.) who is 80 years of age or older by August 1, 2019.
- In the case of joint memberships, only one member needs to be 80 years or older.
- A copy of a government issued ID (Driver's License, passport, birth certificate, etc) will be required to verify qualifications.
- A member's capital credit amount will be discounted at the interest rate of the Co-op's outstanding debt similar to how estate payouts are now handled. There are no member requested partial payouts.

- Request must be on the official application form and delivered either by e-mail to info@ocec.coop, regular mail, or hand delivery by July 31, 2019. Application forms are available on the OCEC website or at the OCEC office.
- If the total amount of Special Retirement distributions sought by qualified members exceeds the total amount approved by the Board, then distributions will be made to retire the oldest capital credits of qualifying members first, such that capital credits retired in this manner occur on a first-in, first out methodology.

For example: In December OCEC will be paying capital credits earned by members for the years 1999 through 2001 and a portion of 2002 for a total of \$275,000. In the case that the amount of Special Retirement Distributions requested by qualified members is greater than the amount approved by the board, the capital credits members earned in 1999 will be paid out first. This will be followed by capital credits earned in 2000 and so on for all qualified members until the amount approved by the Board of directors is reached.

Please call our office or check our website if you have any questions.

Metal Drive



April 27th OCEC's propane staff participated in the annual metal drive which is sponsored by Methow Recycles. Staff collected and hauled metal from various sites to Cascade Concrete in Winthrop.

Pictured left propane Service Tech Steven Konrad loads metal into the trailer at Homestream Park.

OCEC Board of Directors:

Sara Carlberg (scarlberg@ocec.coop) | John Kirner (jkirner@ocec.coop) | Chris Legler (clegler@ocec.coop) | Michael Murray (mmurray@ocec.coop)
Ray Peterson (rpeterson@ocec.coop) | Dale Sekijima (dsekijima@ocec.coop) | Alan Watson (awatson@ocec.coop)

OCEC Implements FireWise Plan to Reduce Fire Risks

Recently the Methow Valley has experienced a “new normal” of longer, drier, more dangerous fire seasons. OCEC is taking actions to lower the risk of trees outside the required clear zones and easements of our overhead lines creating ignition sources. These actions are based on similar programs California utilities developed in response to recent fires in their areas.

OCEC has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program to manage vegetation posing a threat to power lines. OCEC is augmenting this program by bringing in an outside forester to survey the lines and the trees outside of the easements and develop a FireWise plan. OCEC also relies on members to notify us of large branches or hazard trees that could potentially fall through the lines on windy days. If you encounter these situations, please report them so we can check them out.

In addition to vegetation management, OCEC has taken the extra step to minimize the risk of fire during red flag conditions by turning off reclosers. A recloser is an automatic high-voltage electric switch that operates much like a circuit breaker in your home. When a household breaker trips, it will remain off until it is manually reset. A recloser will test the electric line by automatically closing to see if the problem has been removed. If the problem was only

temporary, the recloser will stay closed and power will remain on. This operation is sometimes seen as a “blink” at your home. To mitigate the risk of fire, OCEC will place the reclosers on “non-reclose” so when there is a possible problem, the breaker will operate and the line will be de-energized until OCEC crews can manually inspect the line for problems. Once the line is manually inspected and it is all-clear, the line will be re-energized. This will possibly create longer, more frequent outages. Remote forested areas will have their reclosers turned off starting in June.

One of the fire mitigation techniques employed in California is “Public Safety Power Shutoffs”. These are used during red-flag conditions when high winds are forecasted. OCEC is studying the possibility of also using this as a last resort when high winds are forecasted during red flag conditions. This would involve de-energizing portions of circuits during these extreme conditions. OCEC is working with the outside forester on possible protocols, conditions and locations of these possible proactive outages.

Taking these precautions during red-flag conditions may cause more frequent and longer outages but we hope that our members will understand the benefits of reduced risk outweigh the increase in possible outages.

Transformer Safety

With warm spring weather comes yard work. Members with neighborhood high-voltage equipment and transformers in their yards can do a lot to help themselves, their neighbors, and OCEC work crews stay safe by maintaining clearance around the green metal utility boxes.

Remember to keep ten feet of space around this equipment, especially in front of any access doors, when planting trees and shrubs or building fences and other structures. Proper clearance helps OCEC crews restore power more quickly and safely during a power outage. It also helps them perform scheduled maintenance more safely and efficiently. The clearance is a legal requirement, as regulated by the National Electric Safety Code.

Before starting to shovel, smart and safe digging means calling 811 or visiting callbeforeyoudig.org/washington to request a utility-locate before each job. Using the website for your notification can save time. There is no cost for the member and all utilities will respond to mark the locations of their underground lines so that there isn't an accidental dig-in, which can be dangerous and result in injury and expensive repairs. The notification is valid for 28 days so if the excavation project goes beyond this timeframe, notify 811 again for an extension. For businesses, or if a homeowner hires someone, it's the law to request a utility-locate a minimum of two full business days before doing any digging. But for do-it-yourself homeowners, it's the way to stay safe and avoid financial and legal responsibility for repairs and/or injuries.

For safety's sake, never climb on, plant, or dig around neighborhood electrical transformers.