

KPUD, Community Benefit from Recycling

By Barbara Patterson

If there is a practical way to recycle, reuse or refurbish equipment, Klickitat PUD (KPUD) does it.

"The way we look at it," says Purchasing and Materials Manager Dennis Fowler, "recycling is the proper way to fully utilize our resources."

"And it's an environmentally friendly thing to do," adds Operations Support Assistant Robbie Cacy.

Dennis, Robbie and Warehouseman Julius (J.R.) Robison work together to carry out KPUD's recycling efforts, in addition to their many other jobs.

Most people have seen the large wooden spools that hold wire to be strung on power poles. When the spools are empty, those not recycled through the Universal Reel Company are given away.

Empty spools also are used for covering holes at night on a construction project.

Scrap metal is placed in bins at the warehouse and sold by bidding annually. Bid prices for copper, aluminum and steel are tied to current metal index prices.

Scrap metal comes from conductors when a service is taken out, from old crossarms being replaced and from copper ground wire attached to a power pole being removed, in addition to other sources.

"If any of the removed materials are still serviceable, we put it back on the shelf," Dennis says.

Vehicles also are sold in a bidding process. Most are high-mileage pick-up trucks. One vehicle, a 1990 GMC Sonoma, had approximately 210,000 miles when sold in late 2003.



Robbie Cacy and Dennis Fowler of KPUD show some of the spools the utility recycles around the community.

Old power poles taken out of service are cut into 8- to 10-foot lengths and sold for fence posts.

"Ranchers always find use for these," Dennis says.

The butt ends of these poles—which are treated with special preservatives to prevent rotting before being set in the ground—are sent to the landfill to be buried.

At no cost to KPUD, used motor oil is picked up by a company that uses the oil to fuel a commercial boiler. The same company, for a fee, takes used antifreeze and oil filters for proper disposal.

Robbie sends used toner cartridges from copy machines back to the manufacturer or to Craig's Office Supply in The Dalles for recycling. Printer ink cartridges and cell phones are taken to Goldendale Christian School, where they are sent out to be reconditioned for reuse.

Used cardboard is collected and loaded onto a KPUD vehicle headed for work in the White Salmon area and left at a collection center there.

Good bargains can be found for area residents when KPUD has a surplus materials sale at its warehouse. All items are sold through a sealed bidding process. Among items sold in previous sales were office desks, file cabinets, personal computers, monitors and printers; a 1500 Watt, 13 amp generator; a two-ton hydraulic crane; a large steel tool box; and a doorway with window and door.

Ron Ihrig, KPUD's operations manager, is pleased with the utility's recycling efforts.

"We are heading in a very positive direction," he says, "and we're always looking for ways to improve our ability to reuse and to recycle our equipment." ■