

## Keeping Daily Operations Flowing Smoothly is a Priority for Ron Ihrig

By Barbara Patterson

Ron Ihrig, KPUD's operations manager, began his electric utility career in 1979 as a groundman on the Goldendale line crew.

He became a journeyman lineman, then a line crew foreman, before assuming the assistant operations manager position in 1999 and the manager's job in 2002.

"My knowledge of the system, by coming up through the ranks, helps me a lot in my current job," Ron says.

Ron's priority is to keep the utility's operations running smoothly and safely.

"The people I get to work with are a pleasure," he says.

Ron supervises KPUD's three line crews, whose foremen are Kip Graves, Mike Lutz and John Starr. He also oversees the work of Water-Wastewater Project Manager Doug Miller; Servicemen Bob Fitzsimmons and Mike Courtney; Purchasing Agent Dennis Fowler; Support Assistant Robbie Cacy; Warehouseman Julius Robison; Mechanic Lawrence Browning; and Groundskeeper Brian Schroeder.

One important aspect of Ron's job is to oversee the safety of the line crews. Monthly safety meetings are scheduled, followed by safety committee meetings to review and establish any needed action.

Ron works closely with the engineering department to determine future maintenance needs required for the entire KPUD operation, such as wire and new poles for upcoming projects.

"Much of our planning has to do

with minimizing outage time," Ron says.

Ron also oversees the work of tree-trimming and pole inspection contractors. Pole inspections are done on a routine basis to detect possible damage or rot.

Soon, two journeyman tree-trimmers will be hired as KPUD employees.

"We need to spend more time on tree-trimming and removal," Ron says. "Tree disease—much of it caused by the pine bark beetle—and drought are two factors in deciding to go in-house with tree-trimmers. Trees can do a lot of damage to our lines."

To keep everyone up to speed on current happenings within his department, Ron schedules weekly meetings with the engineers, line foremen and purchasing employees. Jobs and material needs are laid out at these meetings.

"My job is just to make sure everything flows like it's supposed to," Ron says.

Klickitat County has benefited from Ron's many activities outside his KPUD job.

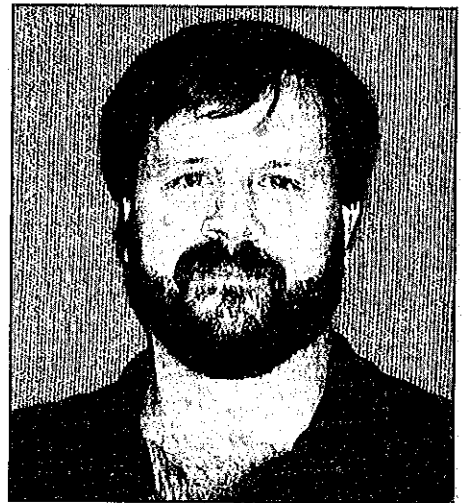
He has served nine years on the county fair board, heading that group as president in 2003 and 2004. He was Goldendale's mayor from 1990 to 1992, and a county commissioner from 1993 to 1996.

"I learned a lot about land-use planning as commissioner, which helps me with my present job," Ron says.

In recognition of his community service, Ron was presented the Outstanding Public Service Award in 1999 by the Washington Public

Utility Association.

In March, Ron was appointed to serve on the Klickitat Valley Hospital Board. ■



Ron Ihrig

