

New Faces on Year-Round Tree Crew

By Brandi Meech

Klickitat PUD (KPUD) customers will see a new set of faces working out of utility vehicles.

KPUD has hired a trimming crew that will provide year-round services to residents of Klickitat County.

Hiring the new crew was completed on August 16. The crew includes three positions: crew foreman, journeyman and groundman. The crew will be stationed out of White Salmon most of the year, but will work throughout the county.

The crew's first order of business will be completing the call-ins or "hot spotting" areas. They will then work on problem trees they notice along the way.

Crew Foreman Dale Stelter is from Snohomish. He was hired by KPUD in July and performed other duties while waiting for the rest of his crew to be hired. Dale was a tree trimmer with Kemp West for 10 years, and has been a tree trimmer for the past 20 years.

Dale is moving to Klickitat County with his wife and four kids. He enjoys hunting, fishing, boating and shooting. He says he is excited to "get the crew up and going" and getting as much done as possible, starting with the customer call-ins.

Journeyman Tree Trimmer Jeff Speelman came to KPUD from Camas. He and his family are looking to buy a house in the Goldendale area. Jeff was previously employed with Tree Inc. for 2½ years.

Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, but



The new Klickitat PUD tree-trimming crew includes, from left, Crew Foreman Dale Stelter, Journeyman Tree Trimmer Jeff Speelman and Groundman John Tallman.

accustomed to this area, Jeff looks forward to living near the Gorge. He enjoys golfing, boating and watching NASCAR races.

Groundman John Tallman is a native to the Goldendale area and was hired in August, completing the new tree-trimming crew.

John has cut timber for 24 years and was previously employed by Log Processors. He lives in Goldendale with his wife and three children. He enjoys hunting and fishing. John expects the crew will be "more than busy" this year, and "as long as there's no computers involved" he is excited to get the job done.

The crew has many stories of tree trimming experiences. Jeff recalls a 2:30 a.m. call he received

at his previous job to remove a pine tree that had fallen into a power line, cutting off power to Hood River.

The tree was removed and power restored.

John had a more close-to-home story of the day he fell the huge spruce tree located on the courthouse lawn.

The crew is excited to begin work and get to know each other, since none of them had met before August 16.

Work will begin along the rivers after call-ins are completed, and will continue until the trees along power line routes are under control.

KPUD is glad to have the new crew onboard and looks forward to starting the season.