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Winter's Fury Brings Us Together

Nothing brings communities together like adversity. Here at the PUD we get a front-line position when winter storms disrupt our lives.

Thursday evening, December 14, the entire Northwest was braced for a storm predicted to have grave consequences for the region's utilities. High winds followed a bout of drenching tree root-softening downpours, causing trees to come tumbling down.

The first call came in at 6:45 p.m. Trout Lake was out of power. Trout Lake is frequently the bellwether for these storms. The little valley nestled up against Mount Adams is used to winter and what it can throw their way.

It did not take long for the damage to spread. At 7:30, calls came in from Glenwood, Snowden, BZ Corners and Husum. Then, just before 9, we lost the Bingen Substation, putting most of the west end of Klickitat County out of power.

KPUD's crews were called out and worked tirelessly until power was restored. It took a week before the last customer's power was restored. During this time the crews spent every waking hour removing trees, replacing poles, restringing conductors and doing whatever it took to get the lights on. What sleep they did get was short. They worked well into each night, usually past midnight. They were back on the job before daybreak, with restocked trucks and ready to hit it again.

During this entire time, office personnel were working 24/7 manning the phones and providing support for the crews.

We called out for assistance from other utilities not hit by the storm. However, the larger westside utilities had snatched up all available PUD crews in Washington. But when the chips are down, neighbors help neighbors.

Friday morning, December 15. Two line crews and a tree-trimming crew showed up from Northern Wasco PUD.

Glenwood was especially hard hit. The transmission line into the valley passes through rough terrain covered in timber. Trees were strewn across roads and over the lines. It wasn't until 10:30 Monday, December 18, when power was restored to the Glenwood Substation.

Several days later, the last customer's power was restored.

I am proud of KPUD's staff and crews, and appreciate neighbors like Northern Wasco PUD and their dedicated hands. I am really thankful to live in a place like Klickitat County, where people come together during adversity.

I want to especially recognize the people in Trout Lake, who took the time to circulate a petition signed by almost 200 residents thanking the PUD crews for their efforts. Many others have called or sent thank-you notes with their words of appreciation, as well. I am adding my name as one who is proud to work at Klickitat PUD, with its dedicated staff and crew, committed to keeping the lights on.

Tom D. Svendsen, General Manager

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