



Benton PUD achieves major milestone- Meter upgrade complete

July 2011

Benton PUD achieved a major milestone in July with the installation of 45,000 advanced meters. Our staff has installed new meters at most homes and is now working to complete the installation of about 4,000 additional meters for our commercial and agricultural customers. The project completion is projected for December 2012. The advanced meters replaced old electromechanical meters enabling Benton PUD to provide better customer service, improve system performance and to operate more cost efficiently.

Electricity usage information and power quality data are transmitted by a radio frequency network back to Benton PUD using equipment and antennas installed on Jump Off Joe Butte, Rattlesnake Mountain, Prosser Butte and in Umatilla.

Today, more than 90% of our meters are read remotely and by the end of 2012 all meters will be read remotely each month. Remote meter reading is already providing cost savings, which include fewer vehicles on the road and less fuel consumption. During the project, as the need for meter readers has reduced, employees have transitioned into other positions at Benton PUD or have voluntarily found positions outside of the utility. The remaining staff will transition from meter reading to other positions at Benton PUD by the end of 2012.

The new system has many customer benefits. By using the transmitted power quality information, the system helps pinpoint the location of outages and system performance issues, resulting in faster response to customers. Customer service representatives are able to answer customer questions about their day-to-day electricity usage. Analyzing daily energy consumption is also useful when home energy audits are conducted. The project positions Benton PUD well to manage the emerging requirements of smart grid and for the next generation of equipment and market conditions that is expected to emerge in coming years," said Jim Sanders, General Manager of Benton PUD.

"Our employees demonstrated extraordinary teamwork to meet this milestone. From the time the meters were delivered, installed and integrated into the system for customer billing, all departments were diligent in their efforts. The new meters are saving the District money which means savings to our customers in the long run."