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WA-18

Material Shortages Impact KPUD

Klickitat PUD is starting to experience critical electric system equipment shortages due to the global shortage of materials and longer delivery delays from many vendors.

Jim Smith, KPUD general manager, says KPUD is short on stock of standard pad-mounted transformers due to material delivery delays and increased construction volumes. These transformers take high-voltage power from KPUD’s distribution lines and convert it to the 120 and 240 volts delivered to residences and businesses when underground power lines are used. These transformers are on order, and the PUD expects deliveries throughout the year.

“We have been communicating with new customers and developers for months that we were expecting these shortages,” Jim says. “Existing customers should also realize that we are facing the same supply chain issues that they are seeing in stores. Delivery times are getting longer, and prices are increasing across many materials.

“For example, these transformers normally have about a 16-week delivery time and were \$1,500 each a year ago. Delivery is now more than a year out, and they are being quoted at \$6,000 each.”

New construction in Klickitat County is increasing the demand for transformers. The PUD would normally see about \$1.4 million in new electric construction activity annually. In 2021, this increased to \$2.8 million, and the same is expected for 2022.

At this time, KPUD and the electric utility industry are seeing supply chain shortages limited to transformers. However, this combination of supply shortages, longer delivery times and increased construction may cause additional shortages in other utility equipment. PUD staff has been working to source materials for these elevated construction levels for 2022 and the 2023 construction season as well.

“The PUD Commissioners have directed staff to commit the funds required to allow us to keep two years of inventory in stock, rather than the normal six to 12 months,” Jim says. “We have the funds to be able to acquire these additional materials to support the increased growth in the county, but with limited supply and elevated usage, there is only so much we can do.”

If you have questions or interest in new developments and want to know more about the impacts these material issues could have, please contact the PUD engineering department.