

Annual PUD Rescue Training

Programs and training keep PUD crew members safe while on the job

By Lori Froehlich



Ed Lexa lowers Joe to Jeff Speelman, who receives him on the ground.

The utility industry loses linemen every year due to job-related injuries and accidents. Most linemen know a co-worker who has been injured or killed on the job. To prevent these tragedies, utility companies focus their resources on safety programs and employee training.

Klickitat PUD is no exception. Fundamental policies and procedures, monthly meetings and annual refresher training sessions are vital to the safety of PUD employees.

One example of the focus on safety is the pole-top, bucket and vault rescue. Klickitat PUD conducts this training every July. The purpose is to practice the quick and safe removal of a victim from a power pole.

“Joe,” everyone’s favorite 180-pound dummy, is belted to a power pole to represent the victim: a fellow lineman who may need rescue due to heart attack, electrical shock, heat stroke, injury or equipment failure.

Linemen are required to first assess the situation and call for help. Next, they climb the pole, use the hot stick to de-energize the power by opening the cutout and then proceed to rescue Joe. A second man on the ground positions himself to receive Joe from the lineman on the pole, stabilize him and begin first aid/CPR.

KPUD’s tree trimmers simulate this scenario, with the victim being placed in a tree for recovery.

The water wastewater crew also is involved in this hands-on safety training. They set up a tripod and simulate a vault rescue to retrieve someone from a trench or deep hole.

While none of the crew members like to consider the possibility of having someone on their crew injured and having to put these skills to use, practicing what to do in the event of an accident could save one of their lives.

Emergency medical technicians from Skyline Hospital were on site and provided refresher CPR training to the crews, as well as use of the automatic external defibrillator, a device that shocks the heart back into rhythm.

Crews also practice bucket rescue during safety training. All crew members are required to familiarize themselves with the various bucket trucks and their controls. Each truck has different controls, so this is important training in case any employees are in an emergency situation that calls for their assistance.

This annual training enables KPUD employees to be ready for any situation that could occur while they are on the job, and better serve the public.

Keeping their knowledge current could mean the difference between life and death. If safety procedures are followed and personal safety is never sacrificed for productivity, all employees can go home safely at the end of each work day. ■



Clockwise from top left, John Starr helps lower Joe to the ground slowly, using his hand for a brake as necessary. Ethan Wanous and Jeff Speelman take part in the annual CPR refresher training given by the Skyline Ambulance crew. Justen Greenwood and Lori Froehlich run the bucket truck for replacing Joe back on the pole after each rescue. Rob Rising talks to Joe as he climbs up to rescue him, letting him know help is on the way.