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WA-18

Fire Brings Community Together

My heartfelt sympathies are with those families in our county who were affected by the Monastery Complex Fire that started September 7 near Goldendale.

I think there are few in the county who were not touched in some way by the devastation some of our local families endured and continue to deal with.

Because we live in a small community, the pain of those afflicted by this tragedy is felt by us all, directly or through friends, family or acquaintances. The outpouring of help and efforts by our citizens has been heartening.

Your PUD fared very well through the conflagration. We lost only three power poles. Apart from an outage lasting three hours, we had power off only when asked by the fire command so it could actively fight the fire safely when near power lines.

I am proud of the efforts of our staff that literally followed the fire and put out flames on the power poles as soon as it was safe to do so, and for remaining available so we could respond as needed. It is difficult to have water readily available to keep things wet to ward off the fire without power to run well pumps.

What a community we live in!

While visiting the evacuation site at the fairgrounds, I saw many volunteers, as well as stacks of clothing dropped off for those who lost everything or just

had to leave their homes with what they could carry.

I have talked to many people affected by the fire who said their neighbors and friends just showed up to help. In some cases, it was to help them move and, in other cases, to help set up sprinklers or water around the house. There were folks who organized and drove trailers around picking up animals and hauling them out of harm's way, allowing families to get their possessions moved more quickly. I know of several families who took other displaced families into their homes. I also heard many, many individuals offer to house people if the need arose.

My own family received many calls, offering us a place to stay or just to check on us. We were fortunate in that we were only put on a Level 2 alert and did not have to evacuate, nor did we lose anything.

How about the more than 1,000 firefighters from around the Pacific Northwest showing up to help fight the fire? One thousand. Wow.

The signs around Goldendale saying, "Thank you," speak for all of us who live here.

I know that for those people who lost their homes or buildings, there are probably no positives in this situation, but we can just be thankful that no lives were lost.

This is truly a great place to live, and I hope everyone takes the time to help those in need, or at least takes the time to reflect on the community spirit that is always evident around our great county.

Jim Smith, General Manager

