

Practice Makes Perfect

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



Kirt O'Leary ties his rope around Joe, a 180-pound dummy, and lowers him safely to the ground.

By Lori Froehlich

The utility industry loses linemen and utility workers every year due to job-related injuries and accidents. Most linemen know a co-worker or fellow tradesman who has been injured or killed on the job. To prevent these tragedies, utility companies emphasize 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 and bucket 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 trained to first assess the situation and call for help. Next, they climb the pole, use the hot stick to de-energize the power line 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 same scenario, with the victim being placed in a tree for recovery.

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

All crew members also attend important refresher training for CPR and use of the automated external defibrillator, a device that shocks the heart back into rhythm.

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

Keeping their knowledge current could mean the difference between life and death for a KPUD worker. 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, TJ Lutz begins to lower Joe to his groundmen. An aerial view of crew members using bucket trucks to familiarize themselves with the controls of each bucket, in case they need to perform a rescue. Justen Greenwood reaches up with the hot-stick to de-energize the power before he rescues Joe. Bernie Predeek ties a knot securely around Joe before he unsecures the dummy from his belt.