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WA-18

Community Updates



Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be able to attend local community meetings this spring. I wanted to give a quick update on some of the topics we would cover if we could get to meetings.

New customer work was extremely volatile during the past year. Customer applications were extremely high at times, only to be followed by low volume periods. I am not sure what that means, but overall, growth in our county continues.

In total, we connected 205 new residential and 17 other new customers during 2020. In comparison, we connected 152 customers in 2019, which was pre-pandemic. Many of our new customers say they are moving from urban areas to live in a safer environment.

In 2020, we met or exceeded our budgeted financial targets. Building on that success, the Klickitat PUD board did not increase electric rates in the 2021 budget. This means your electric rates have increased only 1.5% since 2016.

We have taken advantage of our offices being closed to public entry to improve the front office spaces in our Goldendale office. We plan to complete similar work in the White Salmon office this summer and fall, including adding security glass and upgrades for employee safety when we can reopen. Frankly, I do not like having to do this as it creates barriers between our customers and us. However, I am always concerned for our employees. The work is important given how volatile society is becoming.

Our water and wastewater department received four awards for excellence in plant operations from the state Department of Ecology. These awards were for facilities with zero violations during the year. We operate the county's Dallesport facility, which received its second consecutive award. Wishram received its 11th consecutive award, Klickitat its 12th and Lyle received its 14th.

"I recall when these systems were purchased and how much effort was made in bringing these systems into compliance," says KPUD Board President Doug Miller. "I want to recognize the effort I know it took to get these facilities in good operating order and the commitment it takes to keep systems like the Lyle wastewater treatment plant operating within the strict DOE requirements for 14 straight years. These are difficult standards to uphold."

Our RNG facility has also operated well. The team met our reliability target of 95% for 2020. We continue to work on improvements to the plant to increase its long-term reliability and efficiency. We are working with Republic Services on improved wellfield operations to improve the methane flow to the facility. We appreciate Republic Service's commitment and teamwork.

Given the limited space, I will continue with our update next month. Take care and be safe.

Jim Smith
General Manager