Mason County PUD No. 3 is a community-owned and governed utility, created to provide safe, reliable and cost-based electric and wholesale telecommunication services. PUD 3 strives to meet the community’s expectations through responsive customer service; an educated, well-trained staff; a strong commitment to protect and improve the public’s investment in the utility; and the wise and efficient use of the community’s resources.

PUD 3 Serviceman John Donovan, tests a newly installed Light Emitting Diode (LED) area light fixture after replacing a less efficient High Pressure Sodium (HPS) fixture.

PUD 3 Works for a Brighter Community
Energy Efficiency is an Important Part of PUD 3’s Culture

It sure is getting dark early these days, and PUD 3 has taken some exciting first steps in shedding a brighter light throughout the community with its energy efficient LED outdoor lighting system.

In August, PUD 3 made LED outdoor street and area lights its standard for all outdoor lighting in its service territory. Over the next few years, as high-pressure sodium (HPS) lights fail, we’ll replace them with LED street and area fixtures. By making the change when we are at a location for light maintenance, we save on large up front capital expenses that other utilities make when they consider conversions to LEDs. It’s a unique and efficient way to make upgrades.

The PUD is working with the City of Shelton and other local government agencies to upgrade existing lights to new LED street and area lights. But, the PUD also has an outdoor lighting program for homes and businesses too.

The white light gives the impression of full moon light, which is much more enjoyable than the artificial orange light of the HPS.

The lights are directional, putting light exactly where you want it. Law enforcement representatives speak highly of LED street lights because they allow for better visibility on the roadway, and due to a higher color rendering index (CRI), a better perception of colors.

LED lights are very directional, so instead of wasting light output through the familiar HPS orange glow, the LED’s light is “painted” down on the roadway where it is desired. Older style HPS lights are like a “glowing orb in the sky,” creating light pollution as light shines up and out and down and all over.

PUD 3’s new LED lights are rated at over 11 years of life, which is a great improvement over the 2-5 year life span of an HPS lamp.

Energy efficiency is an important part of the culture at PUD 3. With you, we work hard at uncovering energy waste and upgrading our community!

DID YOU KNOW?
LED Street Lights use 65% Less Energy and are Rated for 11 Years of Life
What's Up with My Heat Pump?

If you have a super-efficient heat pump, you may notice that really cold weather can mean an increase in your electricity bill. When it gets too cold, a heat pump can't extract heat as normal from the outside air temperature. To make up for that, the backup heating takes over. Unfortunately, this isn't very efficient and costs more to operate.

Mason County's cold temperature range is usually perfect for an appropriately sized heat pump in a well-insulated home. Of course, we also get the occasional cold snap, which is why heat pumps have the backup heat feature.

If your heat pump is not working properly, backup heat will become the primary way your home is heated. If you're not aware of your heat pump's status, this can be very costly. The first warning usually comes when people get a high electric bill. Check out PUD 3’s website for powerful advice about your heat pump and watch the “What's Up with My Heat Pump?” video at www.masonpud3.org/coilheat for more heat pump troubleshooting tips. Or contact PUD 3's conservation department at (360) 426-0777 to discuss other ways to eliminate energy waste in your home.

International Recognition for Excellence in Financial Reporting

You can feel confident in PUD 3’s financial management. Once again the utility was awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for its 2013 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report by the International Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada. The GFOA says “the Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting. Its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a governmental entity and its management.” The PUD is one of only three public utility districts in Washington State to apply for such recognition for its financial reporting.

In addition to the ten consecutive GFOA awards for financial reporting, the utility’s operations are inspected annually by the Washington State Auditor’s Office, and have not been subject to a finding in over 35 years. You can see the 2013 Annual Report at www.masonpud3.org/about/financialreports.

LOOK FOR OBSTACLES TO YOUR METER

- Provide the PUD with keys or codes to any locked gate on your property.
- Make sure your family pet is kept in a separate area from the meter.
- Clear debris away from the path to the meter.
- Keep landscaping and bushes trimmed away from meter for easy viewing.

PUD 3’s Tenth Consecutive Award - Financial Reporting

Meter Reading is a Challenging Job

Help us Keep Our Readers Safe and Efficient

Each PUD 3 meter reader is responsible to read between 300 and 600 meters every day in order to properly bill over 32,000 customers each month. When you consider the obstacles they face, that can be a daunting (and dangerous) task! From gaining access behind locked gates, overgrown shrubs, and narrow driveways to hazards such as slippery decks, protective dogs, and climbing over mounds of debris.

The readers pride themselves on accuracy and efficiency and they use many tools to help them do the best job they can for you - our customers. They are amazingly accurate at reading meters with binoculars to save time or avoid obstacles. They also carry dog treats to calm nervous pets and wear PUD logo safety gear so they aren't mistaken for prowlers.

While speed and accuracy are important, the utility stresses safety first. We hope you can help us keep our meter readers safe by looking for potential hazards at your home.

Pictured: Meter Reader Kim Albaugh regularly encounters obstacles while reading meters.

Pictured: Meter Reader Kim Albaugh reads a meter in a well-insulated home.

Pictured: Meter Reader Kim Albaugh reads a meter in a well-insulated home.
Having Trouble Paying Your PUD Bill?  
We Can Help!

With the weather turning wet and cold, you may be surprised by higher than expected electric bills. If you are having trouble paying your bill, call us. There are many ways we can help customers in need of payment assistance.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS
We offer payment options to any customer having trouble paying a bill. Just call us - we will work with you to make payment arrangements that fit your situation.

LOW-INCOME SENIOR DISCOUNT
We offer a discount which removes the daily system charge to qualifying, low-income senior citizens. To be eligible, you must be 61 or older; be a permanent, year-round customer of PUD 3; your annual income must be below $35,000 per year; and not live in federally subsidized housing

LOW-INCOME DISABLED DISCOUNTS
Low-income, disabled customers with accounts in their names, may qualify to have their bill reduced by the daily system charge. To see if you qualify, contact the CAC at 800-952-6992.

PROJECT SHARE
This program provides grants to qualifying customers with electric heat who are in financial crisis. It is funded primarily by donations from Mason County PUD 3 customers. Call CAC at 800-952-6992 to see if you qualify.

LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
LIHEAP, a federally funded program, helps qualified customers with their home heating costs. Call 800-952-6992 to see if you qualify or to schedule an appointment.

LOW/MODERATE-INCOME WEATHERIZATION
We can help customers save energy to reduce their monthly bill and make your home more comfortable. Qualifying customers may have 100% of residential insulation and duct sealing projects paid for by Mason County PUD 3. This is great for rental properties too! Call 360-426-0777 to see if you qualify.

BUDGET BILLING
Budget Billing is a great way to equal out your payments throughout the year. Consider signing up during open enrollment in May.

Rate Increase Takes Effect February 1, 2015
Commission adopts $63.7 Million 2015 Budget
Higher Wholesale Energy Prices Affect Local Rates

In November, PUD 3 Commissioners adopted a $63.7 million budget for 2015 which includes an increase in electricity prices for residential customers: a three percent increase in the cost for energy consumption and a ten-cent per day increase in the daily system charge. The increase goes into effect on and after February 1, 2015 meter readings.

Commissioners also approved a new rate category for cannabis-related businesses.

The budget and subsequent rate increase is primarily driven by higher prices for wholesale electricity supplies and transmission services purchased from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Qualifying low-income senior citizens and disabled customers may want to ask about available discounts that result in a waiver of the daily system charge from their bills. PUD 3 also has a wide range of rebates and incentives to help reduce electricity consumption. Services include a free energy audit to identify ways to save energy.

Major drivers for the 2015 budget include:

- Higher prices for wholesale electricity and transmission services from the BPA.
- State law requirement to purchase more expensive “qualified” renewable energy and continue conservation efforts. (costing about $2.6 million in 2015)
- A continued investment in system reliability projects.
- Increased costs of labor, material and goods.

2015 Budget Breakdown:

- Fossil Fuel: 44%
- Capital: 10%
- Debt Service: 22%
- Operating: 4%
- Labor / Benefits: 7%
- Conservation: 1%

New Residential Rates:
Electricity = $0.0672 per kWh
System Charge = $0.90 per day
*effective with meter readings on or after February 1, 2015

While You're Away
Don't Get Caught with a High Bill for an Empty House

Some customers go away on vacation expecting a smaller energy bill on their return, only to find the bill was pretty much the same as when they’re home.

A home’s electrical devices are consuming energy all the time, whether the house is occupied or not. This is why it’s important to take the proper steps to prepare a home to be empty when it won’t be used for a long period of time.

To see if you qualify for the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), or for Mason PUD 3's Project Share call the Community Action Council (CAC) at 360-426-9726 or toll free at 800-952-6992

For More Tips:
(including a vacation checklist)
www.masonpud3.org/emptyhome
PUD 3 Employee Spotlight
Mark DiBenedetto, P.E., Organizes Blood Drives for PUD 3 Employees.

Mark DiBenedetto, P.E., is (sort of) new to the PUD, but he is not new to donating blood. Hired as a Distribution Engineer in July of 2013, Mark not only brought his skills as a Professional Engineer (PE) to the utility, but also his persuasive personality.

Since his first day on the job, Mark has successfully organized three blood drives for PUD 3 employees at the Johns Prairie Operations Center and is planning to conduct four per year starting in 2015. He says that by volunteering for the Puget Sound Blood Center (PSBC.org), he feels that he is “part of the life-saving link that delivers blood to patients in need.”

Mark and his family re-located to the area from Shelton Connecticut (coincidence, right?) in 2013 to be closer to his wife’s family. Prior to being hired at PUD 3, Mark worked for United Illuminating, also as a distribution engineer. He earned his Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst - which is when he first began regularly donating blood.

For over 50 years, the PSBC has been serving counties throughout Western Washington. With the help of 250,000 registered donors in the region, PSBC collects about 900 units of blood each day. All blood receives immediate, comprehensive testing so that it can be available to 70 regional hospitals – usually in less than 24 hours after donation.

Did you know that for every donation 3 lives are saved?

Mark urges our customers to consider donating as well. He says it takes about 45-60 minutes from walking in the door to walking out - but the blood collection of one pint only takes about 7-15 minutes.

Check out their website: psbc.org or call 1-800-DONATE-1, x2543 to see how you can help.

Let Us Know if You Receive Suspicious Calls
Utility Scam Demands Payment, Threatens Disconnection

Several customers have let us know that they have received calls from scammers claiming to be from PUD 3 and threatening to shut off a customer’s service for a past-due bill. They then demand payment by wire transfer or a prepaid debit card.

Some of the scams also use deceptive tactics to manipulate caller ID systems to make it appear the call is coming from the utility when it is not.

You should be suspicious if:
- You have not received a past-due notice.
- It is after hours (we do not make collection calls after 5 p.m.)
- If it is on the weekend (we do not disconnect on weekends.)
- If they threaten to disconnect immediately.
- If they will only accept specific forms of payment.

If you receive a suspicious phone call, hang up and call the PUD 3’s customer service office directly - there is always someone available 24/7.

PUD 3 News is a publication of Public Utility District No. 3 of Mason County. It is published periodically to keep the customers of PUD 3 updated on local, regional and national developments within the power industry.

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