Mason County PUD No. 3 is a community-owned and governed utility, created to provide safe, reliable and economical services, 24/7. 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.

Community Shared Solar a Bright Solution

Participants share in the cost and benefit of the 75-kilowatt solar project

Community Solar is a different model for solar energy. Instead of customers installing solar on their own homes (which requires home ownership, the right sunny location, and a fairly large upfront investment), Community Solar lets many people come together to build one larger solar power system. Participants benefit through economies of scale, better siting, and the opportunity to take part at a much lower entry level. Instead of paying thousands of dollars for their own solar electric system, customers are able to get financial benefits and support solar in our community for a much smaller investment.

Mason County’s first Community Solar project has been constructed at the PUD’s Johns Prairie operations center. The 75-kilowatt system will benefit 110 participants with the energy produced by the solar array, a Washington State Production Incentive, and federal tax credits. It will generate enough electricity to power seven Mason County homes.

Nearly 2,900 "solar units" were allocated to customers who had registered to participate and collectively pay for the project. Customers signing up for the program requested nearly twice as many units than were available.

Although the PUD reached its size limit under state law on what it can build for community solar, Tom Farmer, PUD commissioner said at the dedication, “we hope that the Legislature will consider changes that will expand the ability of public utility districts and others to develop more community solar energy projects.”

The PUD has a 225-kilowatt solar system on a nearby operations center building, which generates enough electricity to power up to 20 homes.
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.

Here are a few steps you can take to lower bills while you’re away:

- Turn off your water heater.
- Turn down your thermostat.
- Unplug your refrigerator.
- Unplug electronics.
- Close your curtains.
- Use timers and sensors on security lights.

For More Tips:
(including a vacation checklist)
www.masonpud3.org/emptyhome

The “Daily System Charge”

How PUD Maintains Reliable Service for Our Customers

Two components make up the local price for Mason PUD 3 service. There’s the energy rate, which covers the cost of electricity PUD 3 purchases and sells to its customers, and the “daily system charge,” that helps pay for the operation and maintenance of the electrical distribution system that delivers electricity to your home or business.

Most rural utilities on the Olympic Peninsula design their rates to balance the cost of service between full-time residents and vacation home customers. The result is usually lower per kilowatt-hour rates and somewhat higher system charges when compared with more urban areas.

PUD 3 has a large percentage of vacation homes (about 25 percent). We conducted a study that suggested a higher daily charge and lower per kilowatt-hour rate better addresses spreading costs more evenly among seasonal and full time residents to make the system “ready to serve.”

Some utilities have a lower system charge and higher kilowatt hour charge, because they have a much larger commercial/industrial base to guarantee revenue from and a much lower seasonal customer effect (like Seattle City Light and Puget Sound Energy).

Think of the system charge as a “ready to serve charge.” Regardless of the amount of electricity a customer uses, or when, the service will always be available when they are ready to use it. This helps share costs across all customers; full-time and seasonal.

Storm Safety

Always Assume Downed Lines Are Energized

When you see a downed line near a power pole, stay away. All lines should be treated with extreme caution, especially since it’s difficult to tell if a downed wire is a power cable, telephone, fiber optics, or cable TV line. Always assume downed wires are energized. Get away and call us at 360-426-8255.

If you get trapped in your car by downed lines, stay in the car. Call 911 on your cell phone. We’ll get there as fast as we can to make things safe so you can escape.

Linda Gott Board President for 2016

PUD 3 Commission Officers Set

The Mason PUD 3 Board of Commissioners have elected Linda Gott, commissioner from district one, to serve as board president for 2016. Bruce Jorgenson, district three commissioner, will act as vice-president and district two commissioner, Tom Farmer, will be board secretary.

The commissioners serve as the governing board for PUD 3, establishing policy, reviewing operations, and approving plans, budgets and expenditures. The board exercises the legal responsibilities and powers of the PUD, including the establishment of rates and charges for services.

Commissioners meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. at the Johns Prairie Commission Chambers.

The PUD 3 service territory is divided into three commissioner districts, each having approximately an equal number of voters. One commissioner is elected from each of the three districts every two years and each serves a six-year term. A map of the commission districts is available on the PUD website.
Win an iPad Mini!

Time changes all things, including your phone number, email address, mailing address...even your name. It’s important that PUD 3 has your correct contact information. As part of our computer system upgrade, we’re asking all our customers to confirm or update the information we have on file.

• Your primary phone number
• Your cell phone number(s)
• Your email address(es)
• Your mailing address

We’re working to provide more ‘round-the-clock self-service options to meet the needs of our increasingly busy customers. To protect your privacy and guard your data from others, proper authentication is needed for these services.

All customers who give us their updated contact information or confirm their current information by April 25, 2016 will be entered to win an iPad Mini. We will select the winner April 27.

Three easy ways to update your account:
1. Login at www.masonpud3.org/account
2. Simply Call 360-426-8255
3. email updateinfo@masonpud3.org

The Power Restoration Process

When an outage takes place, PUD 3 works hard to restore power as soon as possible.

However, widespread power outages after a major storm can take time to repair. We thank you for your patience.

Here’s what we do: we work from the center out.

• We repair damage to substations first. Unless the substations are working, power can’t get to customers down the line.
• Next, we clear obstructions and repair primary lines.
• Then we inspect and repair tap and secondary lines in residential neighborhoods.

The first two steps usually restore power to most customers. If you find yourself without power, but a neighbor has their lights on, your home may have a damaged transformer or service drop; your meter base may be damaged; or your house may be on a different circuit than your neighbors.

Customers can report outages any time on the outage hotline(s) at:
360-432-1533
360-275-2833 (Belfair)
360-861-4247 (Elma)

Finding Hot Spots in Mason County

PUD 3 Uses Infrared Technology to Prevent Outages

The dark, cold, crisp winter nights find PUD 3 engineers on the hunt for hot spots in Mason County. With a thermos of hot coffee, and their long johns, they use an infrared camera to check power line connections, substations, and other equipment to locate and repair items that may be running a bit hot.

It’s this kind of work that helps make our system safe and reliable. For reference, in the photos to the left, you can see a human standing in front of the Johns Prairie substation. In addition, you’ll see a couple of other ‘hot spots’ that were identified in the field for our linemen to fix during regular business hours.
Michele Patterson has been named the Power Supply Manager for PUD 3. She started in 1994 as a student for the PUD. Since then she has worked in almost every department: from reading meters, to administration in engineering and operations, to being a financial analyst in accounting, to managing the customer service department, and most recently as Facilities Manager for the utility.

She has a set of skills that make her ideal for this position. Such as her organizational abilities, attention to detail, and an analytical nature. She is really looking forward to learning about all of the different facets surrounding power supply at PUD 3 and the region as a whole.

Michele graduated from Shelton High School and earned her associates degree in accounting from South Puget Sound Community College. She also has a Bachelor of Arts degree in business with a major in management and operations from Washington State University.

The light of her life is her two beautiful girls, Ashley and Audrey. Her oldest, Ashley, is 15 and is planning to attend SPSCC next year under the Running Start program. She is also hoping to attend UW to pursue a degree in the medical field. She enjoys playing saxophone and recently joined a quartet. Audrey is 11. Although she is still in elementary school she is just as tall as Michele. She hopes to be an elementary school teacher someday.

Outside of work, Michele enjoys spending time going to the movies, shopping, cooking, and getting outside for adventures (like whitewater rafting, camping & kayaking). She has added “more traveling” to her wish list as well.

To Report a Power Outage Any Time Call:
Shelton: 360-432-1533
Belfair: 360-275-2833
Elma: 360-861-4247

The Pacific Northwest is in what forecasters call an “El Nino” weather pattern, which normally means wetter and warmer conditions during the fall and winter months. However, some of the biggest storms in the Pacific Northwest have come during “El Nino” weather cycles.

It’s important to be prepared. Here are a few things that can help you ride things out:

- A battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries; candles, matches, medicines, first aid supplies, bottled water, and non-perishable food.
- Special needs like crucial medications for at least 3 days.
- Learn how to use emergency heat source.
- Have warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- Don’t forget the needs of your pet.

During bad weather you can get great information on outages on PUD 3’s Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/masonpud3), Twitter feed (twitter.com/pud3), and website (www.masonpud3.org).

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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