



**Portland General Electric Company**  
*Legal Department*  
121 SW Salmon Street • Portland, OR 97204  
503-464-8858 • facsimile 503-464-2200

**Barbara W. Halle**  
*Assistant General Counsel*

November 17, 2006

***Via Electronic Filing and U.S. Mail***

Oregon Public Utility Commission  
Attention: Filing Center  
PO Box 2148  
Salem OR 97308-2148

**Re: AR 506**

Attention Filing Center:

Enclosed for filing in the captioned dockets are an original and two copies of:

- **FINAL COMMENTS OF PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY**

This document is being filed by electronic mail with the Filing Center.

An extra copy of this cover letter is enclosed. Please date stamp the extra copy and return it to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

BARBARA W. HALLE

BWH:jbf  
Enclosure

cc: Service List – AR 506



**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
OF OREGON**

**AR 506/AR 510**

In the Matter of ) **FINAL COMMENTS OF**  
Rulemaking to Amend and Adopt Permanent ) **PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC**  
Rules in OAR 860, Divisions 024 and 028 ) **COMPANY**  
Regarding Pole Attachment Use and Safety. )

**INTRODUCTION**

Portland General Electric (“PGE”) appreciates the opportunity to file final comments in Phase II of this rulemaking. Our comments are divided into two sections. The first is a discussion of some selected issues raised in this docket to which PGE hopes the Commission will pay particular attention, or on which the Administrative Law Judge has requested that the parties specifically comment. The second is a rule-by-rule list that contains PGE’s recommendations for final language to be adopted by the Commission. PGE has also joined in a separate filing, made by itself, PacifiCorp and Idaho Power Company, that urges the Commission to address issues related to wireless attachments in a separate docket.

This has been a long process, and PGE appreciates the time taken and effort made by many parties, in particular the Board members of the Oregon Joint Use Association (“OJUA”), to achieve the difficult task of sifting through the many issues and concerns and coming up with a reasonable set of final rules. PGE hopes that the Administrative Law Judge, and the Commission, will carefully consider its comments filed in this docket as the final rules are drafted.

## DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC ISSUES

### I. POLES VS. TOWERS

One of the questions that have been raised in this docket is whether the rules to be adopted will apply to attachments on utility transmission towers as well as utility poles. In order to answer this question, one must first look to the statutory language that these rules are intended to implement.

ORS 757.270(1), the statutory definition of “attachment” states:

"Attachment" means any wire or cable for the transmission of intelligence by telegraph, telephone or television (including cable television), light waves, or other phenomena, or for the transmission of electricity for light, heat or power, and any related device, apparatus, or auxiliary equipment, installed upon any pole or in any telegraph, telephone, electrical, cable television or communications right of way, duct, conduit, manhole or handhold or **other similar facility or facilities** owned or controlled, in whole or in part, by one or more public utility, telecommunications utility or consumer-owned utility. (emphasis supplied.)

As the word “tower” is never mentioned in the statute at all, and since the rules of statutory construction dictate that one must first look to the language in the statute itself to determine legislative intent [See: *Portland General Electric Company vs. Bureau of Labor and Industries*, 859 P.2d 1143 (1993)], one must interpret the words in bold above in order to determine whether towers are included. In other words, the question is: are utility transmission towers “other similar facilities”? The most reasonable answer to that question is “no.”

Utility transmission towers, as referred to in this discussion, are physically dissimilar from poles. They are tubular steel or lattice structures, many with at least a 400 square foot footprint, unlike wood poles. Steel transmission towers are generally between 80-120 feet above ground, as opposed to utility poles, that are typically 40-75 feet above the ground. They most often carry transmission lines only (in most cases, 115 kV and above), with no distribution underbuild.

Where permitted by the utility owner, attachments to transmission towers are never made according to a cookie cutter process. Every transmission tower must be analyzed for load, both wind and ice, reliability concerns and other forces in its specific location in order to determine if an attachment is feasible and, if so, where the attachment could be located. This is complex and time-consuming. Consideration must be given to issues like grounding, radio frequency interference, system reliability and worker safety. Standard response times, like the ones being sought for the granting of permit applications and make ready work in this docket, simply could not apply.

Moreover, transmission towers are generally not located in the same places that utility poles are located. They are typically found on private rights-of-way, not public, and the basis for the utility's right to place its transmission towers in those locations is a private easement or other contractual right specific to that utility and that location (or an extended series of locations). It is highly unlikely that the rights granted to the utility include granting permission for third parties to use the space occupied by the transmission tower. And, it should be noted, the rights needed include not only the right to attach to the transmission tower, but also the right to enter the land with trucks or other vehicles carrying equipment for installation, maintenance, and repair of the equipment whose attachment is sought. The Commission does not have the authority to alter these existing contracts, or to force private parties to enter into different ones.

Perhaps most importantly, the required level of reliability for the power lines is different between poles and transmission towers. Utilities make commitments to other utilities on reliability levels, including to the local regional transmission organization. If the utility is going to take a line on a transmission tower out of service, it generally must be scheduled 45 days in advance. There are also certain times of the year where any planned outage is difficult to

arrange. Since in most cases the transmission lines must be taken out of service when an attachment is installed or adjusted or maintained or removed, one can see how mandating access to such transmission towers could cause regional power reliability problems that the Legislature probably did not intend, and certainly did not desire, to cause.

Finally, had the Legislature intended to include towers in its “laundry list” of facilities to which the attachment law applies, it certainly did not lack the information necessary to do so when the statute was passed (1979), or at the time of later enactments (1989, 1999). PGE had many transmission towers in place in 1979. A review of Oregon law reveals that the Legislature has, in fact, included “towers” specifically in other legislation. Examples of this include:

**ORS 215.283 – Uses permitted in EFUs**

(1)(d) - Utility facilities necessary for public service, including wetland waste treatment systems but not including commercial facilities for the purpose of generating electrical power for public use by sale or **transmission towers** over 200 feet in height.

**ORS 221.470 – Removal of structures on expiration of grant or franchise**

(1) – “All property and materials (including poles, posts, **towers**,....)”

**ORS 772.210 – Construction of service facilities, right of entry and condemnation of lands**

(1)(b) – “Condemn such lands not exceeding 100 feet in width for its lines (including poles, **towers**, wires, etc...)”

For all of these reasons, the appropriate conclusion should be that transmission towers are not “similar facilities” within the meaning of the statute, and therefore the rules in Division 28 do not apply to any attachments made, or desired to be made, on transmission towers. Utilities should be free to decide whether they can legally, or should from a safety, reliability or engineering perspective, grant any access to their transmission towers and, if so, under what terms and conditions.<sup>1</sup> The statute does not mandate otherwise.

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<sup>1</sup> PGE has granted access to certain transmission towers in the past, and expects to continue to evaluate and grant such requests on a case by case basis.

## II. WIRELESS ATTACHMENTS

An important question to be resolved as this docket proceeds to a final order is whether the pole attachment statutes, ORS 757.270 et seq., apply to attachments made by wireless carriers, including providers of telecommunications services and of information services. This is important because the mandate for these rules comes from the statutes; if the statutes cannot be read to apply to wireless attachments, then the rules promulgated under them should not apply to wireless attachments either.

While the definition of “attachment” in ORS 757.270(1) applies, by its terms, to “wire or cable,” and much of the equipment used by the wireless carriers is neither wire nor cable, the additional language “any related device, apparatus, or auxiliary equipment” is broad enough to encompass the antennas and other equipment they are primarily attaching to the poles. The fact is that the industry itself, and the technology it employs, did not exist when the original statute was passed, but this should not prevent the Commission from taking a modern view of the language based on the need for a regulatory scheme that addresses access to utility poles and conduits, as well as rates, terms and conditions, in a comprehensive, thorough manner.

In addition, the sorts of services provided by wireless carriers that have been described in this docket are generally the same sorts of services that are being provided by the other entities that qualify as “licensees” under the statutory language. ORS 757.270(3). In order to operate, they must have been granted certificates to provide telecommunications services in the state of Oregon by the Commission. One can also construe that the wireless carriers have been “authorized to construct attachments upon, along, under or across the public ways” in that they have been granted permission to operate their systems in public rights of way by governmental entities. Finally, as the state of Oregon has certified to the FCC that it regulates the rates, terms

and conditions of pole attachments, the Commission should view its jurisdiction broadly to avoid questions about the meaning and extent of the self-certification.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Commission is not required, by statute or otherwise, to apply all of these rules to attachments made by wireless carriers, particularly if the attachments are being made outside of the communications space and in close proximity to high voltage power lines. As has been noted by Staff, these wireless attachments, both from the perspective of location and of types of equipment to be attached, present some very different and varied issues that have not been addressed in this docket so far. To allow such attachments to be covered by the rules, in anything like the form proposed by Staff, the OJUA, or other, non-wireless participants, would likely lead to confusion and litigation in front of the Commission. Moreover, PGE believes it would be irresponsible to ignore the many safety and other concerns raised by Staff in an effort to finally bring this docket to a close by the original deadline. To achieve the statutory mandate in section (1) of ORS 757.282, only a thorough development and discussion of all of the issues presented by wireless attachments will do.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the Commission should not be misled by arguments that failure to apply these rules to wireless carriers would run afoul of the prohibition against unjust discrimination under ORS 757.325. What is prohibited by the statute is “undue or unreasonable” prejudice or disadvantage against any particular person, or an undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person. ORS 757.325(1). A failure of a utility to apply a rule to a person where the Commission has expressly reserved time for further rulemaking and evaluation with regard to such persons is anything but “undue or unreasonable” – it is completely reasonable and

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, jurisdiction of the Commission regarding those aspects of pole attachments related to safety can be separately derived from ORS 757.035.

<sup>3</sup> Please see the Joint Comments of PGE, PacifiCorp and Idaho Power for more discussion on this subject.

appropriate. Further, the charges, terms and conditions applied by pole owners to such pole occupants are presumed just and reasonable where set by private agreement, as they currently are. ORS 757.285.<sup>4</sup> ORS 757.020, therefore, should not be a concern either.

While PGE does not recommend such a decision, should the Commission decide to apply any of the rules proposed in this docket to wireless carriers, particularly with regard to the rental rates under OAR 860-028-0110, it should limit such application to attachments made in the communications space. This is a type of location of attachment that Staff originally intended to cover, the issues related to such attachments have at least been thoroughly discussed and aired in AR 506 and AR 510.

### III. RENTAL RATE CALCULATION

#### A. Double Counting Costs.

As a preliminary matter, with regard to OJUA's proposed language for OAR 860-025-0020 and 860-028-0110 in general, and PGE's rate calculation methodology in particular, there is no basis for assertions made that rental rates would or do involve double counting of costs. In PGE's case, all components within the proposed rate include costs from specific, distinct FERC accounts. Under the proposed rule, as in the past, the following will be true: (1) PGE's costs will be recorded individually to these FERC accounts and not applied to more than one FERC account. (2) Any administrative costs that PGE applies to its pole attachment rate will be recorded in FERC accounts other than those included in the base calculation, as PGE cannot charge such costs simultaneously to two separate FERC accounts. (3) Separate billings for all incremental costs identified in 860-028-0110(3) (e.g., for permit application processing, special

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<sup>4</sup> This presumption could only be defeated where a complaint had been filed in accordance with ORS 757.285, and to date no wireless carrier has done so against PGE, or to any other pole owner in Oregon, to the best of PGE's knowledge.



inspections, preconstruction activity, post construction inspection, make ready work, etc.) will be applied to the FERC account in which the original charges were incurred and will directly offset those costs. (4) To verify the accuracy of PGE's books and records, they are audited each year by independent external auditors and the OPUC Staff also reviews significant numbers of PGE costs and transaction listings during audits and rate cases. (5) All PGE billings for pole attachment revenues will be recorded in FERC account 454, Rent from Electric Property. These rents are applied as an offset to PGE's revenue requirement in all general rate cases. Consequently, the rental revenue PGE receives from pole attachments reduces the retail rates PGE charges to its electric utility customers, and not double recovered, as has been alleged.

B. Usable Space.

PGE supports the OJUA's proposed language in 860-028-0110: "The pole attachment rental rate per foot is computed by multiplying the pole cost by the carrying charge and then dividing the resultant product by the usable space per pole." The Commission should recognize, however, that by formally adopting this rule, the pole attachment rate effectively represents a subsidy from pole owners (i.e., primarily electric utility customers) to pole attaching entities (i.e., primarily telecom and cable customers). This occurs because the calculation is essentially the FCC cable rate that unitizes the pole cost by usable space. As usable space increases, the rental rate decreases for individual pole attachments. Consequently, if the Commission chooses to adopt the proposed rate formula, it should follow Staff's recommendation and not consider increasing the usable space in these rules. Ultimately, this formula has the effect of attributing only the portion of the pole used for the attachment (as a fraction of usable space) to determine the attachment rate and attributes the remainder, and vast majority of the pole, to the pole owner and its customers. An alternative rate (as an example, the FCC telecom rate) would reflect the

fact that the entire pole supports all attachments, and more of the pole cost, both the usable and the unusable portions that benefit all occupants, would be applied more equitably to all attachments.

C. Inflation.

PGE believes that an “inflation” rate adjustment factor is appropriate for use in determining the pole attachment rate because historical costs are used to calculate rental rates for future years. We disagree with OJUA that the “inflation” factor should apply only to the carrying charge and we disagree with the OPUC Staff’s comments that there should be no adjustment for inflation in carrying charges or rates.

If pole costs and O&M costs are increasing, as they historically have been for PGE, then precluding an “inflation” factor would mean that PGE is lagging in the recovery of its current costs in the pole attachment rate. For example, pole attachment rates for 2007 cannot use 2007 costs because they are as yet unknown. Also, PGE cannot use 2006 costs for 2007 rates because the 2006 books will not be closed until sometime in the first quarter of 2007 (i.e., the 2006 Form 10-K will not be issued until March of 2007 and FERC Form 1 for 2006 will not be issued until April of 2007). Consequently, 2005 costs are the latest costs available with which to calculate 2007 rates. From 2005 through 2007, however, new poles will: 1) be added to the system for new service areas, and 2) replace old poles that are retired due to age or damage. In both cases, recent history supports the conclusion that the new poles will cost significantly more than either the depreciated net book value of average existing poles or the net book value of old poles to be retired. In addition, although some components of the carrying charge decline or remain flat from year to year, overall, PGE’s carrying charge has been increasing over time.

ORS 757.282 defines the maximum “just and reasonable rate” as “not more than the

actual capital and operating expenses, including just compensation,” of the pole owner. Staff has suggested that setting a rate based on estimated increases in costs or net plant would not comply with the statute. (2<sup>nd</sup> Round Comments of PUC Staff in AR 506, page 6 of 7). On the contrary, PGE’s experience shows that if an “inflation” factor is not permitted by the rule, pole owners are likely to be precluded from collecting their “actual capital and operating expenses” for the year that the rental rates apply. This is true because there is a minimum of two years that transpire from the year actual cost information is available until such costs are recovered in rental rates, and costs typically increase over that time. If an “inflation” factor is authorized, moreover, it should apply to the entire pole attachment rental rate and not just the carrying charge, in order to capture all of the underlying costs that have increased historically over time. PGE has suggested language to be added to the definitions of “Pole Cost” and “Carrying Charge” to appropriately deal with this issue, below.

D. Conduit Rental Rate Component.

As PGE has submitted in comments in the past, and restates for the record in these Final Comments, there needs to be an expansion of what is a permissible basis for rental rate calculation in OAR 860-028-0310 if a pole owner does not keep data in the form of “total length of conduit in the system”. (OAR-860-028-0020, definition of “Net linear cost of conduit.”) While it may be reasonable to set out a methodology for establishing a just and reasonable rate for conduit attachments per the rule, there should be no inference that an owner that does not keep records that allow a calculation to be made in that precise manner must invest in expense tracking systems or labor-intensive work to establish such records. It should be clear from the language in the rule that alternative methodologies may be used and that there is no presumption that such alternative methodologies would not lead to just and reasonable rates. PGE has

proposed such language in its comments, below.

### **PROPOSED LANGUAGE FOR DIVISION 28 RULES**

Below is a compilation of PGE's comments to the proposed rules as modified and filed by the Oregon Joint Use Association ("OJUA") on November 17, 2006:

#### **860-028-0020**

PGE supports OJUA's version except for the following:

(3) "Carrying Charge" – Delete the words "adjusted for inflation" and add the following sentence at the end of the definition: "The Carrying Charge may be adjusted for inflation if historical costs over a year old are used to calculate future rates."

(7.1) "Day" – delete the word "a."

(19) "Permit" – delete the words "or invoice" and add at the end of the sentence "or, if an owner has already begun charging rent for the attachments prior to issuing such written or electronic record, the invoice for such rental charges."

(21) "Pole" – PGE supports Staff's addition of a definition for "Pole" and supports Staff's language for such definition. (using Staff's numbering)

(22) "Pole cost" – (using Staff's numbering) PGE supports Staff's language for this definition, with the following sentence added after the first sentence: "The Pole cost may be adjusted for inflation if historical costs over a year old are used to calculate future rates."

(27) "Support equipment" – the word "licensee" should be changed to "occupant."

(33) "Usable space" – PGE supports moving this definition to 860-028-0110, as Staff has proposed, and supports Staff's language as well.

#### **860-028-0050**

PGE supports OJUA's version except for the following:

(2) should be eliminated (see changes to 860-028-0120(4), (5) and (6), below, for treatment of these issues).

(3) should be moved to 860-028-0115(9).

#### **860-028-0060**

PGE does not support the addition of the words "or agreements" or "and agreements" to the

earlier proposed rule because they are redundant and unnecessary.

**860-028-0070**

PGE supports the OJUA version of the rule.

**860-028-0080**

PGE supports the OJUA version except that the following section should be added:

(5) This rule does not apply to owners or licensees to which ORS 756.310 applies.

**860-028-0100**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule except for the following:

(3)(d) The first sentence from Staff's version of (3)(d) should be added to the end of OJUA's version: "The owner may deny access for the following reasons: insufficient capacity, safety, reliability, and generally applicable engineering purposes."

(4) The third sentence should read: "Where this work requires more than 45 calendar days to complete, the parties must negotiate a mutually acceptable longer period to complete the make ready work."

(5) The first sentence should read: "If an owner cannot meet the time frames established by this rule, and the parties cannot agree on a longer period of time, application, preconstruction activity and make ready work may be performed by a mutually acceptable third party."

**860-028-0110**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule except for the following:

(4) The second sentence should read: "Costs associated with attachments to support equipment and permit applications, if not recovered in the annual rent, shall be recovered separately based on actual costs, including administrative costs."

**860-028-0115**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule except for the following:

(5) The second sentence should read: "This duty includes compliance with OAR 860-024-0012(1) and 0016."

(7) the word "ensure" should be changed to "verify."

(9) this section should be added – formerly section (3) in 860-028-0050.

### **860-028-0120**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule, except for the following:

(4) The first sentence should read, in its entirety, as follows: "Pole occupants shall immediately correct violations that cause an imminent danger to life or property." The last two sentences in section (4) should have the following language added to the end of each: "and any fines, fees, damages or other costs the pole occupant's attachments cause the pole owner to incur."

(5) The first sentence should read as follows: Except where OAR 860-028-0120(4) or (6) applies, an occupant shall respond to a pole owner's notification of violation within 180 days." The second sentence should read as follows: "This duty includes, but is not limited to, response to a notification that contact between the occupant's facilities and vegetation poses a significant risk to the safety of workers or the public, or damage to property including the structures of the pole owner, where the occupant receiving the notice is an operator of communications facilities." The last two sentences in section (5) should have the following language added to the end of each: "and any fines, fees, damages or other costs the pole occupant's attachments cause the pole owner to incur."

(5)(a) After "60 days" insert the words "in compliance with OAR 860-028-0170."

(6)(a) The following words should be added after the word "section": "and any fines, fees, damages or other costs the pole occupant's attachments cause the pole owner to incur."

(7) This section should be added – formerly section (3) in 860-028-0050.

### **860-028-0130**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule, except for the following:

(2)(b) – the word "to" should be inserted after the word "efforts."

### **860-028-0140**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule, except for the following:

(1) This section should read: "A pole owner may impose a sanction on a pole occupant that is in violation of OAR 860-028-120(1)(b), except as provided in OAR 860-028-0120(3)."

### **860-028-0150**

PGE supports OJUA's version of the rule, except for the following:

(2) The first sentence of this section should read: "If a pole occupant is in violation of OAR 860-028-0120(5) or (6), a pole owner may impose a charge on the pole occupant in

addition to any sanctions imposed under this rule and any costs recoverable under OAR 860-028-0120(5) and (6).”

**860-028-0160, 860-028-0170, 860-028-0180, 860-028-0190, 860-028-0195, 860-028-0200**

PGE supports OJUA’s version of the rule.

**860-028-0210**

PGE suggests that the time frames for (a) and (b) be changed to 30 days. Otherwise, PGE support the rule as currently written.

**860-028-0220, 860-028-0230**

PGE supports the rule as currently written.

**860-028-0240**

PGE supports OJUA’s version of the rule (date change).

**860-028-0310**

PGE supports OJUA’s version of the rule, except for the following:

(2) should read as follows: “A conduit rental rate is computed by multiplying the percentage of conduit capacity occupied by the net linear cost of conduit and then multiplying that product by the carrying charge. In the event a utility does not have all the information necessary to calculate the conduit rental rate based on this formula, the utility may propose a substitute formula. A permissible substitute formula consists of multiplying the percentage of conduit capacity occupied times the marginal cost of installing conduit and associated vaults per linear foot (reduced by the net to gross ratio of conduit plant investment) and then multiplying that product by the carrying charge.”

(5) should read as follows: “The conduit owner must give a licensee 12 months’ notice of its need to occupy licensed conduit and the licensee must take one of the following four actions listed, subject to approval by the owner:” Subsections (a) through (d) to remain as already proposed.

DATED this 17th day of November 2006.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Halle', written over a horizontal line.

Barbara W. Halle, OSB No. 88054  
Assistant General Counsel  
Portland General Electric Company  
121 SW Salmon Street, 1WTC1301  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
(503) 464-8858 phone  
(503) 464-2200 fax  
barbara.halle@pgn.com



## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I have caused to be served the foregoing **FINAL COMMENTS OF PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY** in OPUC Docket No AR 506 and AR 510, by electronic mail, and for the parties who have not waived paper service, by First Class US Mail, postage prepaid and properly addressed, upon each party on the attached service list, pursuant to Oregon Administrative Rule 860-013-0070.

DATED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of November 2006.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara W. Halle', written over a horizontal line.

Barbara W. Halle

AR 506/AR 510 Service List

MATT COONS  
matt.coons@comspanusa.net

SUSAN K ACKERMAN  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
PO BOX 10207  
PORTLAND OR 97296-0207  
susan.k.ackerman@comcast.net

JIM DEASON  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
1 SW COLUMBIA ST. SUITE 1600  
PORTLAND OR 97258-2014  
jimdeason@comcast.net

SCOTT JOHNSON  
CITY OF ASHLAND  
90 NORTH MOUNTAIN AVE  
ASHLAND OR 97520  
johnsons@ashland.or.us

DENISE ESTEP  
CENTRAL LINCOLN PUD  
PO BOX 1126  
NEWPORT OR 97365  
destep@cencoast.com

MICHAEL L WILSON  
INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER  
CENTRAL LINCOLN PUD  
2129 N COAST HWY  
NEWPORT OR 97365-0090  
mwilson@cencoast.com

DOUG COOLEY  
CENTURYTEL OF OREGON INC  
707 13TH ST STE 280  
SALEM OR 97301  
doug.cooley@centurytel.com

GARY LEE  
CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS CORP  
521 NE 136TH AV  
VANCOUVER WA 98684  
glee@chartercom.com

PHIL CHARLTON  
ELECTRIC LIGHTWAVE  
pcharlton@eli-consulting.com

BILL KIGGINS, OP. MANAGER  
CLEAR CREEK MUTUAL TELEPHONE  
CO  
18238 S FISCHERS MILL RD  
OREGON CITY OR 97045-9696  
bkiggins@clearcreek.coop

STEPHEN R CIESLEWICZ, PRESIDENT  
CN UTILITY CONSULTING  
PO BOX 746  
NOVATO CA 94948-0746  
steve@cnuutility.com

SCOTT THOMPSON, ATTORNEY  
COLE RAYWID & BRAVERMAN LLP  
1919 PENNSYLVANIA AVE NW STE 200  
WASHINGTON DC 20006  
sthompson@crblaw.com

JILL VALENSTEIN  
COLE, RAYWID, & BRAVERMAN, LLP  
1919 PENNSYLVANIA AVE NW STE 200  
WASHINGTON DC 20006  
jvalenstein@crblaw.com

SEBASTIAN MC CROHAN  
COMSPANUSA  
sebastian.mccrohan@comspanusa.net

STUART SLOAN  
CONSUMER POWER INC  
PO BOX 1180  
PHILOMATH OR 97370  
stuart@cpi.coop

SARAH K WALLACE  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE  
1300 SW FIFTH AVENUE  
SUITE 2300  
PORTLAND OR 97201  
sarahwallace@dwt.com

MICHAEL T WEIRICH  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
REGULATED UTILITY & BUSINESS  
SECTION  
1162 COURT ST NE  
SALEM OR 97301-4096  
michael.weirich@state.or.us

CRAIG ANDRUS  
CUSTOMER ENGINEERING  
SUPERVISOR  
EMERALD PUD  
33733 SEAVEY LOOP RD  
EUGENE OR 97405-9614  
craig.andrus@epud.org

CATHERINE A MURRAY, MGR -  
REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
ESCHELON TELECOM OF OREGON  
INC  
730 SECOND AVE S STE 900  
MINNEAPOLIS MN 55402-2489  
camurray@eschelon.com

CHRISTY MONSON  
SPEER, HOYT, JONES, FEINMAN  
975 OAK STREET, SUITE 700  
EUGENE OR 97401  
Christy@speerhoyt.com

JEANNETTE C BOWMAN  
IDAHO POWER COMPANY  
PO BOX 70  
BOISE ID 83707  
jbowman@idahopower.co

BRENT VAN PATTEN  
IDAHO POWER COMPANY  
PO BOX 70  
BOISE ID 83707-0070  
bvanpatten@idahopower.com

ANDREA FOGUE  
SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATE  
LEAGUE OF OREGON CITIES  
PO BOX 928  
1201 COURT ST NE STE 200  
SALEM OR 97308  
afogue@orcities.org

SCOTT ROSENBALM  
CITY OF MCMINNVILLE WATER &  
LIGHT  
PO BOX 638  
MCMINNVILLE OR 97128-0638  
sgr@mc-power.com

EUGENE A FRY  
MILLENNIUM DIGITAL MEDIA  
3633 136TH PL SE #107  
BELLEVUE WA 98006  
gfry@mdm.net

BROOKS HARLOW  
ATTORNEY  
MILLER NASH LLP  
601 UNION ST STE 4400  
SEATTLE WA 98101-2352  
brooks.harlow@millernash.com

J. WHITE  
CITY OF MONMOUTH  
151 W MAIN ST  
MONMOUTH OR 97361  
jwhite@ci.monmouth.or.us

DAVE WILDMAN  
CITY OF MONMOUTH  
401 N HOGAN RD  
MONMOUTH OR 97361  
dwildman@ci.monmouth.or.us

MICHAEL DEWEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OREGON CABLE AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
ASSOCIATION  
1249 COMMERCIAL ST SE  
SALEM OR 97302  
mdewey@oregoncable.com

GENOA INGRAM  
OREGON JOINT USE ASSOCIATION  
1286 COURT ST NE  
SALEM OR 97301  
genoa@westernadvocates.com

JOHN SULLIVAN  
OREGON JOINT USE ASSOCIATION  
2213 SW 153RD DR  
BEAVERTON OR 97006  
john.sullivan@pgn.com

WILLIAM C WOODS  
OREGON JOINT USE ASSOCIATION  
9605 SW NIMBUS AVE  
BEAVERTON OR 97008  
william\_woods@cable.comcast.com

TOM O'CONNOR  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OREGON MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC  
UTILITIES ASSOC  
PO BOX 928  
SALEM OR 97308-0928  
toconnor@teleport.com

DON GODARD  
OREGON PUD ASSOCIATION  
727 CENTER ST NE, STE 305  
SALEM OR 97301  
dgodard@opuda.org

HEIDI CASWELL  
PACIFICORP  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 1500  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
heide.caswell@pacificorp.com

SANDRA FLICKER  
OREGON RURAL ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE ASSN  
707 13<sup>TH</sup> ST. SE STE 200  
SALEM OR 97301-4005  
sflicker@oreca.org

BRANT WOLF  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
OREGON TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
ASSN  
707 13TH ST SE STE 280  
SALEM OR 97301-4036  
bwolf@ota-telecom.org

CECE L COLEMAN  
PACIFIC POWER & LIGHT  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 800  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
cece.coleman@pacificorp.com

WILLIAM EAQUINTO  
VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS  
PACIFIC POWER & LIGHT  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 1700  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
bill.eaquinto@pacificorp.com

RANDY MILLER  
PACIFIC POWER & LIGHT  
1407 W N TEMPLE, STE 220  
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84116  
randy.miller@pacificorp.com

COREY FITZGERALD  
PACIFIC POWER & LIGHT  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 800  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
corey.fitz-gerald@pacificorp.com

BILL CUNNINGHAM  
PACIFICORP  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 1500  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
bill.cunningham@pacificorp.com

PETE CRAVEN  
PACIFICORP  
825 NE MULTNOMAH STE 300  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
pete.craven@pacificorp.com

JIM MARQUIS  
PACIFICORP  
830 OLD SALEM ROAD  
ALBANY, OR 97321  
james\_l.marquis@pacificorp.com

GENERAL MANAGER  
PIONEER TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE  
1304 MAIN ST PO BOX 631  
PHILOMATH OR 97370

RICHARD GRAY  
PORTLAND CITY OF - OFFICE OF  
TRANSPORTATION  
1120 SW 5TH AVE RM 800  
PORTLAND OR 97204  
richard.gray@pdxtrans.org

PRIORITYONE  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INC  
PO BOX 758  
LA GRANDE OR 97850-6462  
kmutch@pltel.com

LINDA L SPURGEON  
COOS CURRY ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE  
PO BOX 1268  
PORT ORFORD OR 97465  
spurgeon@cooscurryelectric.com

KRISTIN L.JACOBSON  
SPRINT NEXTEL  
201 MISSION ST. STE 1400  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94105  
kristijn.l.jacobson@sprint.com

JERRY MURRAY  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
PO BOX 2148  
SALEM OR 97308-2148  
jerry.murray@state.or.us

JOHN WALLACE  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
PO BOX 2148  
SALEM OR 97308-2148  
john.wallace@state.or.us

JEFF KENT  
QWEST  
8021 SW CAPITOL HILL RD  
ROOM 180  
PORTLAND OR 97219  
jeffrey.kent@qwest.com

ALEX M DUARTE  
QWEST CORPORATION  
421 SW OAK ST STE 810  
PORTLAND OR 97204  
alex.duarte@qwest.com

ROGER KUHLMAN  
SALEM ELECTRIC  
633 7<sup>TH</sup> ST. NW  
SALEM OR 97304-0055  
kuhlman@salemelectric.com

BARBARA YOUNG  
UNITED TELEPHONE CO. OF THE  
NW/EMBARQ  
902 WASCO ST - ORHDRA0412  
HOOD RIVER OR 97031-3105  
barbara.c.young@embarq.com

MARK OBERLE  
PROPERTY MANAGER  
EWEB  
PO BOX 10148  
EUGENE OR 97440  
Mark.oberle@eweb.eugene.or.us

BRIAN THOMAS  
TIME WARNER TELECOM OF OREGON  
LLC  
223 TAYLOR AVE N  
SEATTLE WA 98109-5017  
brian.thomas@twtelecom.com

LISA F. RACKNER  
ATER WYNNE LLP  
222 SW COLUMBIA ST. STE 1800  
PORTLAND OR 97201  
lfr@aterwynne.com

RICHARD STEWART  
VERIZON NORTHWEST INC  
600 HIDDEN RIDGE  
HQEO3J28  
IRVING TX 75038  
richard.stewart@verizon.com

RENEE WILLER  
VERIZON NORTHWEST INC  
20575 NW VON NEUMANN DR,  
STE 150 MC  
HILLSBORO OR 97006  
renee.willer@verizon.com

MARTY PATROVSKY  
WANTEL INC  
1016 SE OAK AVE  
ROSEBURG OR 97470  
marty.patrovsky@comspanusa.net

WENDY L. MARTIN  
ATER WYNNE LLP  
222 SW COLUMBIA ST STE 1800  
PORTLAND OR 97201  
wim@aterwynne.com

CINDY MANHEIM  
CINGULAR WIRELESS  
PO BOX 97061  
REDMOND, WA 98073  
cindy.manheim@cingular.com

RICHARD W. RYAN, PRESIDENT  
HUNTER COMMUNICATIONS, INC.  
801 ENTERPRISE DR. STE 101  
CENTRAL POINT OR 97502  
rryan@coreds.net

ANDREA L. KELLY, VICE PRESIDENT  
REGULATION DEPARTMENT  
PACIFICORP DBA PACIFIC POWER &  
LIGHT  
825 NE MULTNOMAH ST STE 2000  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
andrea.kelly@pacificorp.com

KEVIN O'CONNOR  
TIME WARNER TELECOM  
520 SW 6<sup>TH</sup> AVE  
PORTLAND OR 97204  
kevin.oconnor@twtelecom.com

FRANK MCGOVERN  
QUALITY TELEPHONE INC  
PO BOX 7310  
DALLAS TX 75209-0310  
fmcgovern@qtelephone.com

NANCY JUDY  
EMBARQ COMMUNICATIONS  
902 WASCO ST. A0412  
HOOD RIVER OR 97031  
nancy.judy@embark.com

TOM MCGOWAN  
UNITED TELEPHONE CO  
OF THE NORTHWEST  
902 WASCO ST  
HOOD RIVER OR 97031  
tom.a.mcgowan@sprint.com

KEENE C. BASSO  
LINE SUPERINTENDENT  
CLATSKANIE PUD  
PO BOX 216  
CLATSKANIE, OR 97016  
kbasso@clatskaniepud.com

SCOTT WHEELER  
COMCAST PHONE OF OREGON LLC  
9605 SW NIMBUS AVE  
BEAVERTON OR 97008  
scott\_wheeler2@cable.comcast.com

MARK P. TRINCHERO  
DAVIS WRIGHT TERMAINE LLP  
1300 SW 5<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SUITE 2300  
PORTLAND OR 97201  
marktrincherodwt.com

RICHARD J. BUSCH  
GRAHAM & DUNN PC  
PIER 70  
2801 ALASKAN WAY STE 300  
SEATTLE WA 98121-1128  
rbusch@grahamdunn.com

THOMAS DIXON  
VERIZON CORPORATE SERVICES  
707 17<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
DENVER CO 80202  
thomas.f.dixon@verizon.com

LAURA RAYPUSH  
PACIFICORP  
825 NE MULTNOMAH, STE 1700  
PORTLAND OR 97232  
Laura.raypush@pacificorp.com

THE HONORABLE ROBERT  
ACKERMAN  
OREGON HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES  
900 COURT ST NE RM H-389  
SALEM OR 97310

GARY PUTNAM  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
PO BOX 2148  
SALEM OR 97308-2148  
gary.putnam@state.or.us

SCOTT ADAMS  
COOS-CURRY ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.  
PO BOX 1268  
PORT ORFORD OR 97465  
scotta@cooscurryelectric.com

KEVIN L. SAVILLE, ATTORNEY  
FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS OF  
AMERICA, INC.  
2378 WILSHIRE BLVD  
MOUND, MN 55364  
ksaville@czn.com

SUSAN BURKE  
VERIZON  
Susan.burke@verizon.com

RONALD W JONES  
IBEW LOCAL 659  
4480 ROGUE VALLEY HWY #3  
CENTRAL POINT OR 97502  
ronjones@ibew659.org

SPRINGFIELD UTILITY BOARD  
TAMARA JOHNSON  
PO BOX 300  
SPRINGFIELD OR 97477  
tamaraj@subutil.com

BEND BROADBAND  
JEFF LIBERTY  
jliberty@bendbroadband.net

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS  
SUZANNE CURTIS  
VP & GENERAL COUNSEL  
4031 VIA ORO AVE  
LONG BEACH, CA 90810  
Suzanne.curtis@chartercom.com

CITY OF PORTLAND  
RICHARD JOHNSON  
1120 SW 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE RM 800  
PORTLAND OR 97204  
richard.johnson@pdxtrans.org

COMCAST  
DAWNA FARRELL  
[Dawna\\_farrell@cable.comcast.com](mailto:Dawna_farrell@cable.comcast.com)

COMCAST  
NANCY MARSTON  
[nancy\\_marston@cable.comcast.com](mailto:nancy_marston@cable.comcast.com)

EMBARQ COMMUNICATIONS INC  
WILLIAM E. HENDRICKS, ATTORNEY  
902 WASCO ST. A0412  
HOOD RIVER, OR 97031  
[tre.hendricks@embarq.com](mailto:tre.hendricks@embarq.com)

IDAHO POWER COMPANY  
SANDRA HOLMS  
PO BOX 70  
BOISE ID 83707  
[jbutler@idahopower.com](mailto:jbutler@idahopower.com)

IDAHO POWER COMPANY  
BARTON L. KLINE, ATTORNEY  
PO BOX 70  
BOISE ID 83707  
[bkline@idahopower.com](mailto:bkline@idahopower.com)

IDAHO POWER COMPANY  
LISA NORDSTROM, ATTORNEY  
PO BOX 70  
BOISE ID 83707  
[lnordstrom@idahopower.com](mailto:lnordstrom@idahopower.com)

INTEGRA TELECOM OF OREGON INC  
ROBERT DAVISON  
1200 MINESOTA CTR  
7760 FRANCE AVE  
BLOOMINGTON MN 55435  
[Robert.davidson@integratelecom.com](mailto:Robert.davidson@integratelecom.com)

INTEGRA TELECOM OF OREGON INC  
LEE GUSTAVSON, MANAGER  
[lee.gustavson@integratelecom.com](mailto:lee.gustavson@integratelecom.com)

INTEGRA TELECOM OF OREGON INC  
SHELA HARRIS, MANGER  
1201 NE LLOYD BLVD, STE 500  
PORTLAND OR 97232

INTEGRA TELECOM OF OREGON INC  
JAY NUSBAUM, ATTORNEY  
1201 NE LLOYD BLVD STE 500  
PORTLAND, OR 97232  
[Jay.nusbaum@integratelecom.com](mailto:Jay.nusbaum@integratelecom.com)

NATIONAL RURAL UTILITIES  
COOPERATIVE  
WILLIAM K. EDWARDS  
2001 COOPERATIVE WAY  
HERNDON VA 20171  
[bill.edwards@nrucfc.coop](mailto:bill.edwards@nrucfc.coop)

T-MOBILE  
ANDREW NENNINGER  
[andrew.nenninger@t-mobile.com](mailto:andrew.nenninger@t-mobile.com)

T-MOBILE USA INC  
TERI OHTA  
[teri.ohta@t-mobile.com](mailto:teri.ohta@t-mobile.com)