

# THE PUBLIC NEWSLINE THE POWER



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**Okanogan** • 1331 2nd Ave. N. • 422-3310  
**Omak** • 18 W. First St. • 422-8380

**Oroville** • 1500 Main St. • 476-3531  
**Tonasket** • 17 W. Third St. • 486-2131  
**Twisp** • 201 Highway 20 S. • 997-2526

**PUD No. 1 of Okanogan County**

**June 2019**

## Infrastructure upgrading

### Aging poles, underground lines, more being replaced

Spring and summer bring upgrades and replacements across our system, and many of our customers could be affected.

For the Pateros, Methow Valley and Winthrop/Mazama areas, work to tie-in the Twisp and Winthrop substations to build redundancy this summer will leave these areas without redundancy for a time. The construction schedule plans put the system back to normal operation in early August.

Several direct-buried underground lines are being replaced with conduit and new wire. Some customers may experience brief outages as crews install and transfer services to the new lines. Work is expected in the southern half of Crumbacher, and the Pan Vista and Ridge Place areas in Omak.

The PUD will also be replacing overhead conductor and poles this year in the Dickson Hill to Riverside area, affecting customers as services are transferred. There will be overhead conductor and pole changes in the Chicken Creek area as well, Highway 17 and Highway 97 intersection.



**Top:** Work is progressing on the line to tie-in the Winthrop and Twisp substations to provide redundancy to all the Methow Valley.

**Left:** Aging poles are being replaced in south Okanogan, along with upgrades to equipment and wire along the way.  
**Above:** Crews feed wire underground through new conduit outside of Omak.

**In this issue: Broadband infrastructure • Budget Pay program • Summer efficiency**

# PUD fiber network stretches far

## PUD fiber backbone allows internet providers to serve much of county

Washington State legislators put an emphasis on reaching unserved and underserved areas with broadband internet services this year. At Okanogan County PUD, our services already reach a majority of our service territory.

We currently have more than 400 miles of installed fiber, running along the Highway 97 corridor, and branching off to even some small areas like Loomis. We also have a loop along Highway 153 from Pateros to Twisp and back over the Loup.

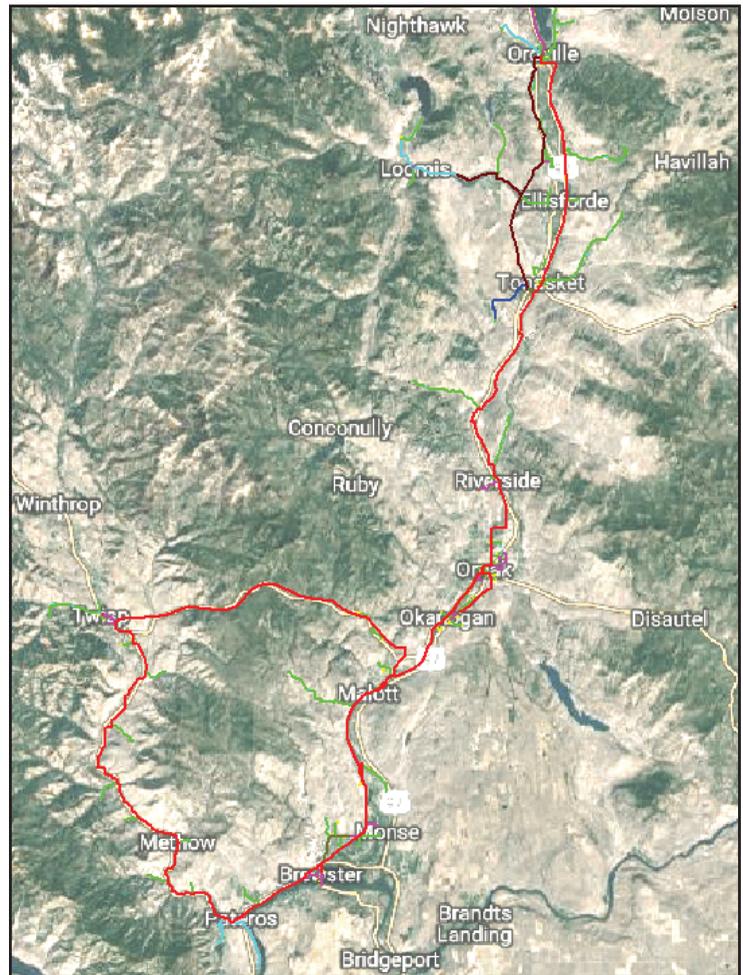
All hospitals, libraries and schools in the PUD service boundaries have direct fiber service.

State law prohibits PUDs from providing retail internet services, so we only sell wholesale to local providers, with whom homes and businesses can get an account and start receiving internet service.

So far, there are 439 fiber customers and 2,335 wireless or WiFi customers. The PUD itself has 18 direct customers.

Without the PUD's fiber optic infrastructure, internet access in Okanogan County would not be at the level it is. All major carriers and local retail service providers use the PUD network to transport data into and out of the county.

Need service in your area? The cost to extend fiber can be a big one, but if enough neighbors are willing to share the cost, then our lines can reach even farther. We already have identified some possible areas for "joint-build" projects like this.



Above: A map shows the routes of the fiber optic network throughout the county, in multiple colors depending on the route. Main route is in red.

Left: A single strand of fiber can serve up to 10 gigabits per second, and our main backbone is a 144-strand line.

# Know your bill with budget pay

## Pay the same for power monthly, based on 12-month average

Summer is a great time to get signed up with our residential budget payment plan. Instead of paying high bills in winter and low in summer, we can average out your bills to help with monthly budgets.

Residential customers who have no balance due can enroll in the plan. The monthly amount is an average based on the past 12 months of billing history. (If you do not have 12 months of billing history, the

average will be calculated from the billing history of previous residents.)

Each budget payment account is analyzed and recalculated in June. This could result in an increase or decrease in the monthly amount, depending on usage patterns and account balances at the time of the recalculation. Any overpayment or underpayment is reflected in the next 12-month billing amount.

Any residential user can apply in person or by telephone at any of our offices in Okanogan, Omak, Oroville, Tonasket, Brewster or Twisp.

# What does it mean to be public power?

*Public Power 101*  
by Okanogan PUD staff

It's time to answer some frequently asked questions - what exactly makes public utilities "public?" How do they compare to private utilities?

Well, let's start with the three considerations that most customers want to know about: rates, reliability and environment.

## 1. How do our rates compare?

In a study by the American Public Power Association, the national average residential charge per kilowatt-hour was 13.2 cents for private, 11.5 cents per kWh for public.

Okanogan PUD rates are actually less than half the national average for public power, as Washington State has some of the lowest average costs in the nation due to efficient hydropower. Okanogan PUD bills are typically around the fifth lowest in the state.

## 2. How reliable is public power?

Our focus is on our customers. On average nationwide, outage times for private utilities are 133 minutes per year. For public power, it's 59 minutes. We work 24/7 to get power back on.

## 3. How clean is public power?

This is pretty diverse nationwide, so let's just focus on Washington. There are 24 public electric utilities in the state, and almost all of them get 90% or more of their power from clean (carbon-free) resources (Okanogan County is around 93%).

So why the difference? Public utilities are governed by an elected board, which makes decisions for the benefit of the customer-owners as a not-for-profit company. In private utilities, decisions are made for the benefit of the investor-owners, in a for-profit business.

We keep the bills low and the lights on to serve our customers.

# Save time, money with SmartHub

## Go paperless, check energy use and more with app or program

Each month, Okanogan PUD sends about 14,000 bills in the mail. That's a lot of stamps, envelopes, paper, etc. And then those customers usually send their payment back via the mail, which means even more stamps, envelopes, paper, etc.

Save on postage and save some trees by switching to paperless, online billing through SmartHub. You can also check your power usage, compare month-to-month, see your payment history and more.

Go to our website or search for SmartHub on your smart device and register your account.

(You can also scan the QR code at left to snap you right to the website or your smartphone's app store.)

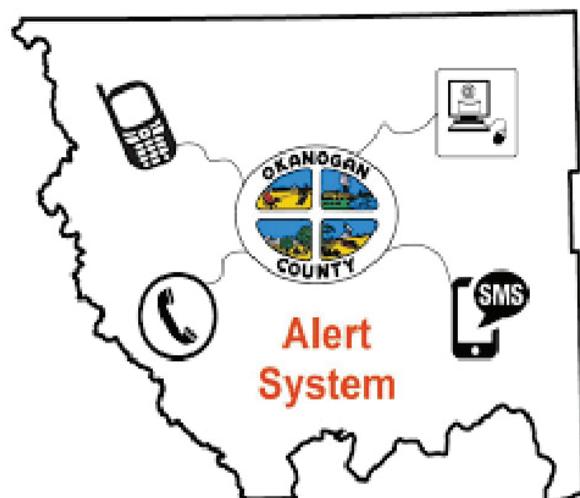


# Okanogan Alert system helps in emergencies

Keep up-to-date on emergency situations, disasters or other concerns locally through the Okanogan County Alert System, provided by Okanogan County Emergency Management. Visit [www.okanoganDEM.org](http://www.okanoganDEM.org) or text OKCOUNTY to 888777, or text a specific city name to 888777 to only get notifications relevant to that city.

Sometimes, the PUD is able to share information through this service as well during outages.

Check out the Emergency Management Facebook page, Twitter page or website for additional information.



# Okanogan County PUD

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## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

# Tips to keep the cooling bills low

Although summer means lower bills than winter, the summer cooling bill can be even less if customers follow a few tips to make their systems work at maximum efficiency.

Heating and cooling are the biggest consumers of electricity year-round throughout the U.S. Some folks are upgrading to more efficient systems, replacing doors and windows and doing other major projects to make huge savings over time, but that isn't possible for everyone.

Below is a fairly easy checklist with low-to-no-cost ways to keep the bills low while you keep the temperature low.

## SUMMER EFFICIENCY CHECKLIST

Get the most out of your cooling systems and save some energy (and money!)



### □ Set the temp

Program your thermostat to 78 degrees Fahrenheit when you aren't home, and 68 or higher when you are.

Set your water heater to 130.

Set your refrigerator to 36-39 and freezer to 0-5.

### □ Place fans

If you use fans, make sure they are placed well for circulation of cool air.

### □ Clean/replace filters

Clean or replace filters in your AC/HVAC units regularly.

### □ Check leaks

Check your weatherstripping and caulk around doors and windows to keep heat out and cool in.

### □ Close curtains

Close shades/curtains on windows that get a lot of sunlight during the day and keep out the heat.

### □ Use oven & dryer less

Plan meals for the grill or microwave instead of using the stove and plan on using the dryer when it's cooler out to cut back on appliance heat.

### □ Clear the HVAC unit

Clear the area around outdoor units from weeds or other items to keep it performing at its best.

### □ Plant some shade

Plant trees on the east and south side of the home to create some natural shade from the sun's rays.

Need more tips and ideas? Request a free energy efficiency audit from us!

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