

# OTEC Board Approves Rate Increase

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members will see an increase in electric bills mailed after October 1 following a decision by the OTEC Board of Directors at its September 20 meeting.

The Bonneville Power Administration, which supplies power to OTEC, recently announced a 7.8-percent average wholesale power rate increase to its utility customers, which includes electric co-operatives such as OTEC. While 7.8 percent was the average increase BPA announced, the specific increase to OTEC was tallied at 11.43 percent.

Because power costs account for about half of OTEC's cost of operation, OTEC will pass this increase through to members and also include a slightly higher than 1-percent increase for long overdue system upgrades.

The total retail rate increase to members is about 7.11 percent.

The rate increase will vary per rate class. The final amount

will depend on a member's actual energy use.

The average residential electric bill will increase by \$7.13 per month, says OTEC General Manager Werner Buehler. This includes an increase in the monthly residential delivery charge from the \$15 to \$18.

"BPA power costs are by far the largest single cost we incur," Buehler says. "Our board of directors carefully considered the option of absorbing all or part of the BPA increase, but concluded that to do so would result in OTEC members ultimately paying higher rates down the road."

"OTEC rarely increases rates," Buehler adds.

"The last increase was in 2001. These occasional increases are vital to maintaining dependable service at the most affordable price possible. Increases also protect the operational integrity and financial stability of our organization."

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the new rate adjustment, call your local OTEC district office. ■



## Don't Be Shocked: Check Your GFCI Outlets

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than two-thirds of electrocution deaths could be prevented with the use of ground fault circuit interrupters.

Here are some electrical safety tips to consider:

- GFCI outlets—which are more sensitive to current fluctuations than a fuse or circuit breaker—should be installed anywhere an appliance might come in contact with water.
- Underwriters Laboratories suggests testing GFCIs monthly to make sure they are working properly. Push the "reset" button on the GFCI. Plug a light with an on/off switch into the receptacle. Turn the item on. Push the test button. The light should go off. Push the reset button again. The light should go on. If the light remains on when the test button is pushed, the GFCI is not working properly. You should call an electrician to rewire or replace the GFCI.
- When using outdoor tools and appliances, use only extension cords labeled for outdoor use.
- Use extension cords only when necessary and only on a temporary basis.
- Use polarized extension cords with polarized appliances.
- Insert plugs fully, so no parts of the prongs are exposed



when the extension cord is in use.

- Replace cracked or worn extension cords with new 16-gauge cords that show the listing of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, and have safety closures and other safety features. ■