



ORCAS POWER & LIGHT COOPERATIVE

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OPALCO Improves Reliability with Olga Substation Upgrade

Last week a big package arrived by barge at Obstruction Pass landing: a twelve-ton transformer for Orcas Power & Light's Olga Substation. The transformer was delivered to the substation, where it was met by a sixty-ton crane to lift it into place. OPALCO's line crew, substation technician and engineers have been hard at work to upgrade the Olga Substation, bringing it up to current standards and improving system reliability for Orcas, Decatur and Blakely Islanders.

The Olga Substation was built in 1968. In 2008, the Orcas crew upgraded the circuit breakers, controlling the power that flows out. The second phase of the upgrade began on January 1st to add the new transformer, tie the Olga and Eastsound substations together, redo the ground grid system and install additional power quality monitoring equipment. Special "ohmed" rock was installed to meet safety requirements. This rock holds up to one million ohms of resistance to protect crew members working in the substation. Currently in the testing phase, the new transformer is slated to come online in mid-March.

OPALCO members will benefit from increased system reliability: with the two substations "phased" together, line crews will be able to reroute power to reduce outage times; and the improvements provide a stable backup system for service to Decatur and Blakely Islands. In December 2008, OPALCO also leased another submarine cable (already in place) from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to serve Center, Decatur and Blakely Islands as well as the Olga substation. System Engineer Joel Mietzner said, "with the additional BPA cable online, substation and system improvements, we're giving members the best power quality and reliability that we can provide."

OPALCO is a member-owned cooperative electrical utility serving more than 14,000 accounts on 20 islands in San Juan County. OPALCO provides electricity that is 97% greenhouse-gas free and is predominately generated by hydro-electric plants. OPALCO was founded in 1937 to bring electricity to rural islanders and is one of 900 electric co-ops in the United States today.

- Your Member Owned Utility Since 1937 -

Captions:

1. Crane arrives Obstruction: "Sixty-ton Crane arriving at Obstruction Pass."
2. Setting Transformer Olga Sub: "Crane setting the 12-ton transformer for OPALCO's Olga substation."
3. Dan Jeremy: "Journeyman Lineman Dan Watters and Apprentice Lineman Jeremy Price prepare the substation for the new transformer."
4. Substation View "View of the Olga Substation"

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