

Things are changing fast right now. Stay in the loop!



The OPALCO crew is still at work keeping the power on – while practicing safety precautions. For those in danger of unpaid bill balances building up, or businesses that have temporarily closed, please fill out a COVID-19 relief form and call us at 360-376-3500 to set up a payment plan.

Find out the latest OPALCO COVID-19 updates:
www.opalco.com/newsroom

Hanging at home?



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save money on those
home improvement
projects!

- Rebates
- Switch It Up!
- Home Assessments
- DIY Project tips
- Resources

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Normally we would be sharing our annual report with you at the annual meeting. Check out this excerpt from the 2019 Annual Report from our General Manager, Foster Hildreth. Read the full report on our website.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, your team at OPALCO was already in full response mode to address how our world of energy and available resources was dramatically shifting with climate change and new carbon legislation. Now, the whole world has changed. We are just in the beginning stages of a major world pandemic that is taking lives and changing just about everything we know: our health and safety, our livelihoods and the economy, education, our ability to move about freely and our vision for the future. Islanders have dug deep and responded with tremendous resources, kindness and innovative ways of looking out for each other: the kind of rugged cooperation that our remote island communities are built on.

I am so grateful for our co-op family: our staff, crew and board. In less than two weeks, our entire team transitioned from business as usual to new social distancing and safety practices, remote meeting protocols and seamless service to our membership via phone and online access.

We have a highly qualified team of committed, skillful employees who are willing to go the extra mile and a hard-working and dynamic board of directors making thoughtful, well-researched decisions and who have the confidence to stand up for OPALCO's mission and vision.

In response to the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, OPALCO has responded with relief measures and will continue to reassess the needs and resources. At the time of this publication,

OPALCO has provided the following measures through the end of May:

- No late fees on bills
- No disconnections due to unpaid bills
- Businesses that must temporarily close can disconnect service without fees
- Increased funding for Project PAL and Energy Assist

At the same time, we are asking members impacted by COVID-19 to complete a payment plan form so that we can track and measure the magnitude of unpaid bills over time and seek assistance from any disaster relief funds that become available. OPALCO must maintain a viable business in order to keep reliable power flowing to the 20 islands it serves; as a non-profit cooperative, it does not have financial reserves to divert to relief efforts; any measures provided are funded by the membership as a whole through borrowing and rates. We will do everything we can to help our members through this disaster.

The viability of our little co-op is challenged not only by COVID-19 but also by the rapid changes in the energy world. With new carbon legislation in effect, all utilities in the Pacific Northwest are scrambling to find, build and invest in renewable sources of power to meet the needs of their consumers and avoid huge price penalties on fossil fuels. At OPALCO, we are faced with a steep and expensive climb to bring renewables on board: we are limited by geography and siting challenges to find places to build renewable resources in San Juan County. To reach our goal of generating up to 50% of the power we need here in the

islands, solar panels would cover as much as 1,000 acres (and must be located near substations), and we'd depend on some tidal generation (with land along the adjacent coastline for transmission facilities) to hit the mark. Our islands don't have industrial netherlands where generating facilities can be hidden: we must build what we can live with in plain sight. We will hit a point at which the environmental impacts of new generation are too great for our sensitive and beautiful archipelago

Our current fuel mix is already 93% greenhouse-gas-free – but the federal hydro system that we currently depend on will be pushed past capacity as every utility in the region exercises their full rights to the system. We must not only transition away from fossil fuels, but we must transition towards a portfolio of appropriate renewable power that includes local and new regional sources.

OPALCO is building solutions for the future of our power that:

1. protect our membership from regional black-outs as competition for resources increases
2. reduce our dependency on mainland generation
3. increase local resiliency – our safety net
4. encourage conservation and energy efficiency as prime resources
5. utilize all available technologies and investigate all available generation resources
6. maximize environmental benefits to our islands (clean air and water)
7. minimize rate impacts over the long-term as power costs rise
8. make best use of member resources

The full Integrated Resource Plan is available on our website and we are dedicated to explaining our vision through extensive communications –as soon as we can get back out there safely to do so. The way forward is clear. And it requires major investment over the coming years to position our Co-op to be able to offer reliable, affordable power into the future. Just as a generation of OPALCO members paid for the shift from local diesel generators to a system of submarine cables in the 1950-60's, our generation (and the one after us) will have to pay for our transition away from fossil fuels.

A clean, safe and reliable renewable energy future is within our reach. It will require the same kind of rugged cooperation that we're seeing today as our communities come together to survive the COVID-19 pandemic and its myriad impacts and disruptions. Our success hinges upon our ability to work together as a cooperative, as a county and as citizens of the Salish Sea. I have no doubt that we are all up to the task.

Please do read about all the significant accomplishments your little co-op achieved in 2019. I'm very proud of what our team can do – and has done since 1937 to build a healthy and sustainable quality of life in San Juan County.

We look forward to seeing everyone next year at our 2021 Annual Meeting!
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