

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 23, 2008

News Release 08-11

Brad Peck, Public Information Officer, 509-377-8247

Page 1 of 2

Gary Miller, Communications, 509-377-8728

Energy Northwest celebrates 25th anniversary of first fuel loading at Columbia Generating Station

RICHLAND, Wash. –Christmas morning 25 years ago saw the loading of the first bundle of nuclear fuel into the Columbia Generating Station reactor. A total of 764 fuel assemblies were loaded over 19 days. In the quarter-century since then the 1,150-megawatt power plant has generated reliable, at-cost power for Northwest ratepayers.

Today Columbia Generating Station is the only operating nuclear power plant in the Northwest, generating enough electricity to serve well over a million homes.

Several employees who witnessed the initial fuel loading are still working at Columbia, including Don Merhar, currently manager of emergency preparedness. He was the senior reactor operator in charge of fuel operations. “I remember it vividly. We were all intensely focused on working off a long checklist to get the plant ready to do its job.”

Once the fuel loading was complete and other components installed, the vessel head was secured. The historic event of initial criticality – the nuclear chain reaction – was achieved on January 19, 1984, beginning an extensive program of testing and training, lasting almost a year. Commercial operations were declared at the plant on December 13, 1984.

The plant has improved in operational reliability over two-and-a-decades of service, contributing approximately 12 percent of the power distributed by the Bonneville Power Administration transmission grid. As of this Christmas morning the station will have produced over 170 million megawatt-hours of power with zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Fuel assemblies stay in the reactor core for six years before being replaced with new assemblies. A biennial refueling operation includes the replacement of one-third of the fuel in the reactor. Those operations are scheduled for late spring when the Columbia River and its tributaries are at their peak power producing capacity.

Fuel removed from the reactor is cooled in a used-fuel pool before being loaded into huge concrete and steel casks for on-site dry storage. The used fuel will eventually move to a national repository, or a fuel recycling facility in the U.S. or abroad. Ninety-five percent of the used fuel material removed from the reactor can be recycled into new fuel.

Energy Northwest is a not-for-profit public power, state joint operating agency headquartered in Richland, Washington. Chartered in 1957, the consortium has 24 public power members; 20 public utility districts and four municipalities. The agency's nuclear, hydro, wind, and solar power projects collectively deliver nearly 1,300 megawatts of reliable, affordable, environmentally responsible electricity to the Northwest power grid. Energy Northwest continually explores and develops new generation opportunities while offering a wide range of energy and business services.

www.energy-northwest.com

###