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Columbia Generating Station returns to service

RICHLAND, Wash. – Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant is back on-line producing power for the Northwest after completion of its nineteenth refueling outage in the plant's 25 year operating history. The 1,150-megawatt generator was reconnected to the Northwest power grid yesterday afternoon.

Approximately one-third of the 764 nuclear fuel assemblies in the reactor core were replaced while major maintenance and equipment replacement work was performed throughout the plant. The outage occurs every two years and has very high standards for safety and performance with thousands of people working on hundreds of pumps, valves, motors and other systems many which are not accessible while the plant is operating.

“The work is complete and the plant is ready to perform reliably through the upcoming 23-month operating cycle,” said Vice President Nuclear Generation Scott Oxenford. “It’s satisfying to finish the outage and return Columbia to service because it produces very valuable power for the region.”

The outage is timed to coincide with spring time snow melt and runoff that maximizes power output from the region’s hydroelectric system and minimizes impact while the nuclear station is offline.

The outage originally targeted to last 38 days ran a few days longer than the initial goal.

“We came close to our planning estimates, but ultimately safety and quality of work are higher priorities than the schedule,” added Oxenford.

Vic Parrish, Chief Executive Officer, applauded the efforts of Energy Northwest’s 1,000 employees and more than 1,800 contract and temporary workers from across the nation who supported the outage. “A tremendous amount of work was safely performed, an important investment in the plant’s dependable operation. This will benefit the ratepayers of the region who enjoy Columbia’s reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power today and for decades to come.”

All the power produced by Columbia Generating Station is delivered to the Bonneville Power Administration at the cost of production. BPA in turn distributes the power throughout the region.

Columbia Generating Station, owned and operated by Energy Northwest, has been in commercial operation since 1984. At full power, it produces approximately 1,150 megawatts, enough to power one million Washington homes.

The next the refueling outage is schedule for 2011.

About Energy Northwest:

Energy Northwest is a not-for-profit public power, state Joint Operating Agency headquartered in Richland, Washington. Chartered in 1957, Energy Northwest has 25 public power members; 21 public utility districts and four municipalities. The consortium's nuclear, hydro, wind and solar projects 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.

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