

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 9, 2013
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News Release 13-11
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Columbia Generating Station Begins Refueling and Maintenance Outage Saturday

RICHLAND, Wash. – Columbia Generating Station begins its 21st maintenance and refueling outage this Saturday.

Energy Northwest and the Bonneville Power Administration time the outage to coincide with spring time snow melt and runoff that maximizes power output from the region's hydroelectric system and minimizes the impact of taking the nuclear station offline.

“During this outage, there is no single major project, but instead, a lot of bulk work that we'll do throughout the next 40 days to help ensure Columbia continues to produce safe, reliable and cost-effective power for the region,” said Brad Sawatzke, chief nuclear officer of Energy Northwest.

More than 1,300 skilled outage workers were hired locally and from across the country to support maintenance projects throughout the plant. The added workers join Columbia's normal work force of about 1,100 employees and bring substantial economic value to the region.

“The workers have already accomplished a tremendous amount of work to set us up for a successful outage,” said Sawatzke.

Work crews will focus on replacing about 240 of the 764 fuel assemblies in the reactor core during the outage. The outage scope also includes more than 2,000 work orders involving approximately 14,000 separate tasks.

The outage comes just after Columbia reached a milestone of sending its 200 millionth megawatt hour of electricity to the Northwest power grid since commercial operation began in December 1984. During 2012, Columbia sent more than 9.3 million megawatt hours of electricity to the regional power grid, setting a facility annual generating record.

The 1,170 megawatt plant, located 10 miles north of Richland, is scheduled to restart and reconnect to the Northwest power grid in mid-June.

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About Energy Northwest

Energy Northwest develops, owns and operates a diverse mix of electricity generating resources, including hydro, solar and wind projects – and the Northwest’s only nuclear power plant. These projects provide enough reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy to power more than a million homes each year, and that carbon-free electricity is provided at the cost of generation. As a Washington state, not-for-profit joint operating agency, Energy Northwest comprises 27 public power member utilities from across the state serving more than 1.5 million ratepayers. The agency continually explores new generation projects to meet its members’ needs. www.energy-northwest.com.



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