

Public Power Week is the first full week of October

Why celebrate?

Sometime today you will use electricity. It may be in your office, when you make your morning coffee, or when you login to your computer. Electricity is a staple of our lives and of our economy. October 4-10 is National Public Power Week; a national, annual event sponsored in conjunction with the American Public Power Association recognizing the 2,000 public utilities

across the nation that collectively provide electricity on a not-for-profit basis to 46 million Americans. While Public Power Week isn't a holiday marked on your calendar and won't likely be celebrated with family gatherings, special decorations, or a large sphere dropping in Times Square, that doesn't mean it should go by without at least a little recognition - because here in Washington State, not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities play an important role in meeting the daily electricity needs of communities.

Washington's consumer owned utilities serve more than half of all electric customers while delivering almost two-thirds of the electricity in the state. Public Utility Districts, part of the public power family, serve almost a third of the state's electricity needs and about half the state geographically. As not-for-profit utilities owned by the communities they serve and governed by locally-elected boards of commissioners, PUDs not only strive to help residential customers maintain comfort in their homes but also work to support local, mainly rural economies. This Public Power Week is a good time focus on the contribution of public power as an economic driver in our state.

Rates and reliability are key factors in attracting new industry to Washington and helping existing businesses thrive. Washington's PUDs offer the lowest electricity rates in the nation. Not-for-profit services along with local control and local accountability contributes to affordability and reliability in areas served by PUDs, providing a competitive advantage for existing businesses as well as those seeking to expand or to locate in Washington. But affordability and reliability is just part of the picture. Washington's consumer-owned utilities offer something else in demand by many businesses and industries; clean energy. Washington consumer-owned utilities are far out ahead of the curve nationally, serving customers with some of the cleanest energy in the nation, thanks to our vast hydropower resources complimented by other renewable energy resources and nuclear power. In fact, 95% of the resources that serve PUD customers produce zero greenhouse gases, an attractive feature not only for residents but for businesses and industries seeking to power their operations with clean energy. To maximize our existing clean energy resources and keep rates affordable, PUDs have a long history of promoting conservation and energy as a least-cost, environmentally friendly resource. In 2014 alone, PUDs helped customers save more than 350,000 Megawatt hours of electricity. That is enough to power more than 30,000 homes. Industrial and business customers have seen the financial advantage of working with their local PUDs on energy efficiency improvements with bottom line energy savings.

As Public Power Week gets underway, you don't have to celebrate by carving a large orange gourd or sending out "Public Power Week" greeting cards; just take a moment when you flip on the light switch to remember there are consumer-owned utilities in Washington working hard for you, for our economy, and for our environment.

