

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Friday, January 19, 2024.

In the PT *Leader*: The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) issued an advisory at 5:30pm on Thursday, January 11, noting that multiple automobile accidents had occurred due to winter conditions, and urging that motorists either exercise caution or delay their travel, if possible. The DEM issued a second advisory at 9:58am on January 12, noting that road conditions remained hazardous due to ice, and again urging motorists to consider delaying non-essential travel, since they anticipated the roads would remain icy through Monday, January 15. The Friday morning advisory stated, "Road crews will continue to sand roads to provide traction, but that may only help so much. Temperatures may be too cold for salt to be effective, and plows cannot remove thin layers of ice."

The DEM's third advisory, at 8:23pm on January 12, reported that the systems of the Jefferson County Public Utility District (PUD) were already at their peak load in multiple areas, and requested that customers reduce any unnecessary power consumption. The advisory pointed out that record-low temperatures meant record power consumption. The PUD recommended, "Keep thermostats at ...68 degrees and avoid heating unnecessary spaces with inefficient resistance wall or space heaters."

PUD Digital Communications Specialist Jameson Hawn reported the initial storm that rolled through on January 11, before the snow, took out power to more than 2,000 customers. Hawn said, "During extreme cold, the demand on our system is far higher. On Friday evening, the extreme cold and high draw caused multiple outages along Cook Avenue and 49th Street in Port Townsend. Line crews remained on site in sub-20-degree temperatures, re-energizing customers as quickly as possible, and reducing cold-loading issues." Cold-loading is when a large number of homes cool rapidly during a power outage.

Hawn said, "Once the power returns, the system is pushed too hard, as home systems go into emergency mode to reheat, creating further outages. To avoid cold-loading issues, line crews must energize homes in sections to avoid overload. Cold-loading greatly increases the time to re-energize an area." To further reduce cold-load pickup, Hawn asked PUD customers to go to their home circuit breakers and switch off their water heaters, and even furnaces, in the event that they experience a prolonged outage. Hawn said, "Wait between 30 minutes to an hour after power is restored to switch them (back) on. This can be a challenge if it's cold, but it helps a lot with cold-load pickup."

A tip Hawn provided to homeowners from the PUD's line crews is to turn on a front porch light when an outage occurs. He said, "Our system easily identifies outages on a neighborhood level, but a physical light, to reference when power is restored, helps our crews a lot." Hawn also asked the community to drive safely around work areas, and give those crews as much space as possible, and to stay away from any downed power lines! Do not drive over, or attempt to remove, any lines crossing a driveway or roadway, because there is often no way to tell if a line is energized.

Hawn additionally warned the public never to touch a downed line that's in contact with a tree or branch, as those objects could also be energized. Instead, call the PUD customer service line at 360-385-5800.

This week, sadly, three women were killed in Portland, Oregon after a severe ice storm, when a powerline fell on their SUV, and according to KIRO 7 News that they were electrocuted when they got out of the SUV and touched the metal of the doors. Perhaps if this ever happens to you, it might be a good idea to stay in the car until help arrives.

Mitzi Jo Gordon is the PT *Leader*'s New Managing Editor. She had this to say about the paper and her new role: "This really is your newspaper. My name is Mitzi Jo Gordon. Feel free to call me MJ... I believe community news, at its core, is all about people. So I'm asking the same question of every person I meet...: What would you like to see more (or less) of in your local paper?... You've asked for a newspaper that celebrates the joys of life in Jefferson County, and serves the community as a resource of information and mutual support....I'm truly excited to be living in Port Townsend, and I have a budding vision for *The Leader*, ... to produce a paper that's straightforward, consistent, and compassionate in its approach, with locally relevant and accurate content. ...I hope you'll continue reaching out. Share your thoughts with me at editor@ptleader.com."

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.