

Vandals endanger more than themselves

Vandalism continues to be a costly and potentially dangerous concern throughout the electric utility industry. On Nov. 13, Western and Yampa Valley Electric Association in Craig, Colo., discovered vandals had damaged two different transmission lines by shooting tower insulators. Fortunately, no

power outages resulted from the incident.

The damaged lines belong to Western and Yampa Valley, an electricity provider for Craig and the surrounding area. "Three of our 230-kV steel towers were damaged," reported RM Foreman **Dave Tiede**. "On one structure, 12 out of 17 insulators were shot out. On another, we could see a bul-

let lodged in a broken insulator. The act was pretty flagrant." It took Western's Craig line crew one day and \$10,000 to fix the structures.

Yampa Valley damage was worse. "Eleven insulator strings on three structures were hit," reported Bud Stanley, a Yampa Valley operations manager. "Fortunately, we didn't lose power on the line. About 3,000 people south and west of Craig would have been in the dark." It took Yampa Valley line crews two days to

fix the 69-kV towers at a cost of \$14,000. When acts of vandalism occur, ratepayers always pay the price.

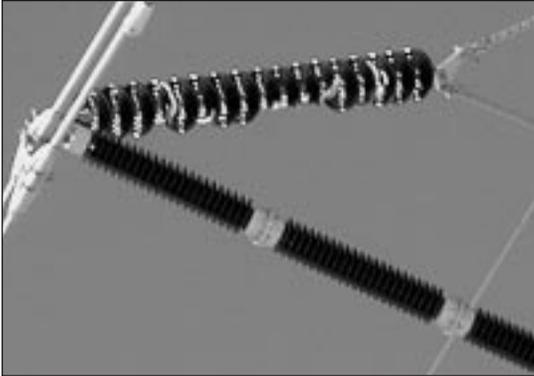
"The area where the vandalism occurred is often a party place for local kids," noted Moffat County Sheriff's Deputy Larry Dalton. "But at this point, we're not sure who did it. We're still investigating."

Shooting at power lines is fraught with danger. A similar incident took place on one of Western's Arizona transmission lines. "In that case, the lines actually came down and the shooter came into contact with live lines," explained Western Safety and Security Specialist **Pam Moody**. "He was admitted to the hospital suffering burns to his legs and groin. This incident could have easily resulted in a fatality.

In addition to safety issues, if an outage occurs, it can cause a system disturbance that could impact literally thousands of people.

"People just need to stop and think about the risks and dangers of shooting power lines. And besides, it's against the law," said a frustrated Tiede.

Report transmission line vandalism to local law enforcement officials or Western's 24-hour dispatcher at 970-490-7279.



Remnants of tower insulators damaged by vandals on Western and Yampa Valley Electric power lines in Craig, Colo. on Nov. 13. (Photo by Dave Tiede)