



News Release

Puget Sound Energy ties together new generation of technologies allowing greater interaction with customers at new Customer Care Center

BELLEVUE, Wash. (Aug. 21, 2000) -- In an era of roller coaster energy prices, one Pacific Northwest utility is painting a vision for the future that puts the customer in charge. It's an idea -- now well on its way to fruition -- that runs counter to the way utilities have priced their services in the past and defies the conventional wisdom about the need for a legislative deregulation of the industry.

Puget Sound Energy, which serves 915,000 electric and 580,000 natural gas customers in Washington state, is leading the way nationally in linking technologies that offer both big and small customers, the conservation, convenience and, ultimately, cost savings they seek.

In mid-August, PSE hosted a tour of influential industry and financial analysts at the company's new state-of-the-art Customer Access Center in Bothell, Washington, the location of its customer service operation, and where 20 technologies tie together, creating a powerful customer information system.

The analysts got a picture of today and of the future, experiencing the combination of technologies that are changing the industry:

- * wireless automated meter reading, which enables on-line, real-time monitoring of consumption and faster detection of outages.
- * remote monitoring and control of energy usage
- * ConsumerLinX, the central-office "brain" or customer information system which ties together usage, service and billing information

One leading Wall Street firm's analyst, Peter Staples of Merrill Lynch, said following the tour, "In my view, Puget Sound Energy's strategy for investing in new technologies should give it an edge. The company is moving quickly to provide their customers with an array of options, from choosing when to receive their bills to receiving real-time information on the hourly price of energy and on their energy use."

His comment is typical of the reaction from other utilities who have been following the development of ConsumerLinX. This software solution was pioneered by PSE's subsidiary, ConneXt, which is now offering these service advances to other utilities.

According to Penny Gullekson, Puget Sound Energy vice president of customer service, "The next era of energy usage management puts the customer in charge. Our objective is to offer the benefits of a deregulated environment -- without the pain that's been associated with the transformation of other industries like airlines and telecommunications."

Puget Sound Energy is working closely with the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission to build a model for dynamic, or real-time, pricing.

This model would allow a responsible approach to pricing that reflects changes in the market price for the commodity while giving the customer choices of when and how to use energy.

"No one likes to see the price spikes and threatened rolling blackouts such as we've seen in California this summer," says Gullekson.

"What's needed is an entirely new approach, one that is equitable to consumers, businesses, utilities and producers -- encourages energy efficiency," she added.

"What we have launched at PSE is more than just a promise, it's reality. We're mixing leading-edge innovation and technology with personal service to build a pricing structure and conservation-oriented future for our customers," Gullekson concluded.
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