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*CONTACT: Ed Mosey, BPA (503) 230-5359*

## **BPA transmission expert to help solve Northeast blackout mystery**

**PORTLAND, Ore.** — A national transmission expert from the Bonneville Power Administration has joined a U.S.-Canadian task force to help analyze the causes of the massive Aug. 14 blackout in the Northeast. The engineer, William A. Mittelstadt, was recently named “2003 Federal Engineer of the Year” for his innovative work improving the reliability of powerlines.

“They called on us for help and we’re sending the best and the brightest,” said Vicki VanZandt, the Bonneville Power Administration’s chief engineer. “Bill led the effort to diagnose and treat the causes of the 1996 West Coast blackout.”

VanZandt said that Mittelstadt was one of the chief architects in designing and installing electrical equipment and procedures to prevent cascading blackouts like the one experienced recently in the Northeast and Canada. He has retired from BPA but continues to advise the agency.

In the arcane science of moving electrons over wires, Mittelstadt is recognized as a guru. He developed new planning practices, tools and testing for design and stability of high voltage transmission systems. He has developed planning and reliability standards that have been accepted for the grid in the western states.

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“As a result of the work of Bill and his associates at BPA, we have a much more reliable system here in the Northwest than we had five years ago,” VanZandt said. “However, these devices are designed primarily to respond to problems. Our regional grid needs substantial upgrading in the form of new power lines and substations over the next five to ten years.”

One or two additional engineers will join Mittelstadt to investigate the Northeastern outages and help make recommendations for preventing future blackouts. No timeline has been set for the work, which will be supervised by U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Herb Dhaliwal.

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