

Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative serves about 3,600 customer meters in the Eugene area.



Facilities Plan

Blachly-Lane discovered that its 1965 headquarters building would not sustain a 5.0 earthquake – let alone a possible 9.0 Cascadia Subduction Zone quake. The utility looked at multiple options, including doing nothing or leveling the existing building and starting over. The best course was to remodel the building and reinforce its concrete masonry to withstand a major earthquake, including tying in struts and trusses, and reinforcing the roof.

The utility also built an addition to the headquarters building to support essential services. The now 10,000-square foot facility includes kitchen facilities and a large multipurpose room that could run operations or house cots for long-term stays. The addition also includes a backup electricity generator with a 2,000 gallon propane tank. Propane was deemed the best option for running the generator after considering alternate fuels. For example, natural gas lines do not run near the facility, and may not be functional after an emergency.

Blachly-Lane estimates that the generator could run nonstop for 10-12 days. However, in the event of a large emergency like a Cascadia earthquake, the utility would conserve as much propane for the generator as possible – especially through the first three days as the team takes stock of the damage and challenges, and then calculates how long they could or will need to run the generator.

The project's budget totaled about \$5.5 million. Construction started in March 2017, and was completed in 2018.



A rendering of Blachly-Lane's headquarters addition.

Incident Response

Ideally, the upgraded headquarters will sustain operations and staff for a 3-day, 3-week, or 3-month emergency. With its continuous improvements and training, Blachly-Lane is getting closer to reaching that 3-month goal. Key management would report to the facility after an emergency, then would bring in line personnel. The utility estimates starting with about a dozen employees reporting after an event, eventually working up to 24 as needed.

Blachly-Lane's strategy is to be able to provide shelter if an employee can't get home after an emergency. The utility can provide sleeping arrangements in its multipurpose room, as well as food and water. On site, Blachly-Lane has a two-week supply of bottled water and food rations. The utility looked back on how it has historically needed and used items, and two weeks seemed like the most practical length of time.

Personal Preparedness

Blachly-Lane is working with its employees to ensure they are also personally prepared.

As part of its safety and wellness program, the utility has provided a "go bag" for each employee to take home, which includes essential materials, including a drinking water filter. Recognizing that employees would have a hard time getting to work if they were worried about their own families at home, Blachly-Lane also gave employees the option to purchase additional go-bags if needed.

Ongoing Training

Blachly-Lane has incorporated regular staff safety trainings through its monthly safety meetings.

The utility is also actively participating in statewide planning and resiliency meetings and networking with local municipalities to coordinate efforts. Blachly-Lane staff have also learned from worldwide events to see how emergencies have affected communities – and how those communities responded.

Blachly-Lane is also reaching out to Bonneville Power Administration staff and Lane County Fire Department staff about how they could incorporate the use of HAM radios if they are up and running after a major emergency.



Blachly-Lane's staff participate in monthly safety trainings.