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SABOTAGE AT THOMPSON PASS

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Saboteurs toppled two transmission line towers at Thompson Pass near Valdez late Friday night. The towers, which are owned by the Alaska Energy Authority, a State agency, were severely damaged. At least two guy wires, which are used to hold the towers upright, were sawed through with a hack saw, causing the towers to fall.

The towers had just been installed by Irby Construction Company/Alaska Utility Construction, Inc., J.V. as part of the Authority's effort to repair damage to the Valdez-Glennallen transmission line caused by snowslides this past winter.

Individuals sympathetic to the International Brotherhood of electrical Workers (IBEW) had begun picketing earlier in the day in which the sabotage occurred. Irby an open shop contractor, had been embroiled in a lengthy dispute with the IBEW as to the construction of a transmission line for the Homer Electric Association, Inc. The matter appeared to be resolved, however, when the Homer Board recently awarded a portion of the work to Irby and agreed to utilize employees represented by the IBEW for the balance of the project.

Irby spokesman, Aaron Downing, stated the presence of the pickets suggests the IBEW was not satisfied with the compromise. Downing added there is a long history of IBEW sympathizers harassing open shop electrical contractors in South Central Alaska. He stated it is a sad day for Alaska when individuals believe they can place themselves above the law and damage state property and get away with it. Downing also pointed out that this cowardly act of violence effectively places all the consumers of the Copper Valley Electric Association in economic jeopardy. "It is far more expensive to burn diesel fuel in Glennallen than use the cheap power available from the Solomon Gulch Hydro Plant in Valdez. No matter how this shakes out the Copper Valley Electric Association consumers are going to have to pay a lot more money for their power."

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He noted that Alaskans are becoming fed up with such tactics and in his judgement is one of the reasons union membership and their work opportunities continue to decline. "No decent person would want to be associated with a bunch of thugs" he said.

Irby, in conjunction with state authorities, intends to make every effort to ensure the responsible individuals are apprehended. Under Alaska law the destruction of the towers constitutes a class B felony punishable by imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$ 50,000.00.

Downing, states the extent of the damage inflicted by the saboteurs was continuing to be evaluated, but it appears the replacement cost will exceed \$ 300,000.00. It is presently unclear as to whether Copper Valley residents will suffer power outages this winter as a result of the sabotage. Downing went on to say "there are lots of good, fair minded, honest union members and only a few that would resort to such despicable tactics. Thirty years ago this wouldn't have happened in Alaska - the thugs would have been run out of the country. It is a shame that now all of us will have to pay for the acts of cowardly saboteurs, i.e. All the consumers of Copper Valley Electric Association through increased operating costs, the Alaska Energy Authority and therefore all Alaskans through lost state revenues, and the labor unions from unionism getting a bad name - all because of an unpurged criminal element."

"Our firm Irby Construction Company/Alaska Utility Construction, Inc., J.V. is prepared to offer a \$ 20,000.00 reward to anyone providing the information that leads to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for cutting down the towers. These people belong in jail not out jeopardizing the rest of us." Downing went on to say, "If you have any information please contact the Alaska State Troopers. We have laws and courts that know how to deal with those who are a menace to society."