

# Media Alert

Nov. 12, 2007

## For Immediate Release

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### Pacific Power boosts Oregon drug-free workplace initiative

*Workdrugfree Oregon seeks to increase drug-free workplaces statewide and raise awareness of economic impact of substance abuse*

TUALATIN, Ore. — A statewide initiative to help businesses address workforce substance abuse received a boost this week with a \$5,000 grant from Pacific Power. The funds will be used to support Workdrugfree Oregon pilot sites and raise the awareness among Oregon policymakers of the impact of substance abuse on Oregon's economy.

"The very real costs and risks of substance-abusing employees, and the struggle to find qualified job applicants, have become major obstacles to business success in Oregon," says Diana Corder, Pacific Power economic development manager. "We know how important it is to our state's economy to turn that around, especially in rural Oregon where population and available workforce issues simply magnify the challenge of maintaining economically healthy communities." Pacific Power serves more than 545,000 customers in Oregon, more than 470,000 of them outside the Portland area.

A 2006 Oregon Employment Department survey showed only 13 percent of Oregon businesses have drug-free workplace programs. Three years ago, an unprecedented 60 percent of Oregon employers identified on-the-job drug use as a great concern.

"The current research results show the enormity of the need for drug-free program assistance to Oregon businesses," says Don Skundrick, Vice President, LTM, Inc., in Medford. "Small businesses are particularly vulnerable with rates of employee alcohol and drug use twice as high as larger businesses." Skundrick serves on the Pacific Power Regional Advisory Board. LTM, Inc. and Pacific Power both are drug free workplaces.

Skundrick is leading Workdrugfree Oregon, a statewide campaign to dramatically increase the number of drug-free workplaces through education and training provided by local pilot sites. "We are helping businesses overcome such obstacles as lack of time, money and expertise and the fear of losing key employees," he says.

Pacific Power funding also will support a Jan. 16, 2008 conference for Oregon policymakers on *The Economic Impact of Substance Abuse in Oregon* at Kaiser Town Hall in Portland. The conference, chaired by Dan Harmon, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Hoffman Corp., will recap legislative and policy initiatives such as a new substance abuse prevention policy for job seekers utilizing Worksource Oregon agencies. Employer, labor, agency leader and legislator panels will identify future policy and legislative initiatives.

Workdrugfree Oregon pilot sites include chambers of commerce in Albany, Astoria-Cannon Beach-Seaside, Baker City, Bend, Gresham, Klamath County, McMinnville, Medford-Jackson County, Molalla, Prineville-Crook County and Salem-Keizer. Other business groups sponsoring pilot sites include Workdrugfree Douglas County, Portland Drug-Safe Workplace and Manufacturing 21 Coalition.

Workdrugfree, a program of Oregon Nurses Foundation based in Tualatin, oversees and coordinates the Workdrugfree Oregon business initiative. The initiative is an element of the Oregon Business Plan's *Meet Targeted Workforce Needs of Industry* initiative. For more information, visit [www.workdrugfreeoregon.org](http://www.workdrugfreeoregon.org) or [www.oregonbusinessplan.org/workforce.html](http://www.oregonbusinessplan.org/workforce.html).

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