



Behind the Scenes:

Wyoming Cooperative Carbon Power and Light's Linemen, Steel Poles Take Leading Role on Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs" Program

Wyoming's Carbon Power and Light Director of Operations David Cutbirth, three of his utility linemen and one apprentice were featured on the Discovery Channel's popular "Dirty Jobs" series. And steel distribution poles also played a leading role on the show.



The episode, which aired in January 2011, is a part of the show's series that's focusing on various types of work, highlighting a different vocation in every state in the U.S.

According to Cutbirth, the Discovery Channel contacted the Wyoming Rural Electric Association in search of a good place in Wyoming to work with utility



linemen. Carbon Power and Light was selected for the shoot.

"We gave them two different scenarios," says Cutbirth. "The first one was cutting down trees to clear our right of way. Our forests are being ravaged by beetle kill right now and we're very concerned with a dead tree going down and starting a forest fire. But they didn't like that idea.

“The second idea was to switch out a wood distribution pole and replace it with a steel one. We outlined that we were going into a remote location, deenergizing the line, changing the pole out from wood to steel, and then reenergizing the line. And this is what we went with.”

Cutbirth says that the filming of the steel pole installation made what is typically a quick job into a very long day. “Normally it would take two to three hours to switch out the pole, but for the filming it was a 10-hour job.”

In the winter of 2009, an ice storm had split the wood pole and the pole had to be replaced. Cutbirth’s crew was able to cut the top of the wood pole off in the middle of winter but had to wait until summer to take the pole out. “We normally use a bucket, but we couldn’t get to this location with the bucket truck so we had to use the steps for this situation,” says the veteran lineman. “This created a perfect ‘Dirty Jobs’ scenario.”

The task at hand for Mike Rowe and his crew involved a bit more than just installing a steel pole. At the start of filming, a dead tree was blocking the sun. Mike decided that if his cameraman wanted to cut the tree to get more light, the cameraman would have to do it himself. Cutbirth chuckles at the memory of the chain saw flying through the air and the cameraman wrangling with the tree.

Cutbirth notes that although the “Dirty Jobs” show was founded on highlighting a variety of truly dirty situations, the show has evolved into an interesting and humorous series of stories on hands-on jobs of all types. To this point, he says that working as a lineman shouldn’t be perceived as dirty work, but instead as a

challenging profession even for his most skilled crew. He adds that steel has helped make it cleaner, rather than dirtier, work: “In my experience, working with steel poles is cleaner – no splinters or treatments – and simpler than wood, from installation to maintenance.”

The veteran utility operations professional says that the entire experience was a lot of fun. “The whole ‘Dirty Jobs’ crew was terrific to work with, and Mike Rowe is a really funny guy. They all work hard, move fast and keep you on your toes, but most of all they enjoy what they are doing,” he says. “Most of all, I really respect him for calling attention to the importance of what we do.”

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To contact David Cutbirth at Carbon Light and Power, please call 800-359-0249 or send an email to dcutbirth@carbonpower.com.

To learn more about steel distribution poles, visit <http://www.smdisteel.org> or lineman.steel.org, or send an email to ti@steel.com.