



**Testimony on House Bill 2860  
Submitted by Oregon Public Broadcasting  
House Energy and Environment Committee  
February 28, 2013**

Chair Bailey, and members of the committee, I am Debbie Rotich, Vice President of Administration and Human Resources at Oregon Public Broadcasting. Our president, Steve Bass, is sorry that he cannot be here today to testify. I oversee OPB's facilities and its broadcast engineering functions, although I am not a technical expert. Roger Domingues, our Director of Network Engineering, is with me today and can answer any technical questions you may have.

OPB is a non-profit organization that operates Oregon's most extensive network of public television and radio stations. From our headquarters in Portland, OPB operates five television stations based in Portland, Corvallis, Eugene, Bend and LaGrande, and 41 related television translators serving rural communities. Our radio network consists of 16 radio stations serving much of that same area with an emphasis on news and information.

Until 1993, OPB was a state agency and received considerable funding from the State. Today, OPB is an independent, non-profit organization that receives no operating support from the State of Oregon. However, OPB continues to play a significant public service role for both the State and its citizens.

One of the voluntary responsibilities that OPB has carried over from its days as a state agency is serving as the State Primary station, the only activation point for the Emergency Alert System in Oregon. In the event of a statewide, regional, or national emergency, OPB initiates messages informing other broadcasters (commercial and non-commercial), viewers and listeners of a wide variety of emergencies including Amber Alerts, wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

OPB and other public broadcasters provide vital coverage during times of emergency. While we've been fortunate in Oregon not to experience a widespread emergency situation, other parts of the country weren't so fortunate.

During the recent Hurricane Sandy, millions in the New York metropolitan area were without power. Cell phone networks, cable television and internet service were disrupted. Were it not for the public broadcasting station, WNYC, which maintained their critical broadcasts on emergency conditions, people would have

been more than just without electricity, they'd be in the dark about the severity of the storm, where to seek shelter or help, and the recovery efforts.

The experience with Hurricane Sandy, and earlier, Katrina, is that the only reliable method of communication in an emergency is good old-fashioned radio. Most people have AM/FM radio receivers in their cars, which can be operated by battery power. Many have crank radios as part of their emergency supplies. Were Oregon to experience a major earthquake, radio would likely be the only lifeline.

But to play that critical role if that time comes, OPB must have a 100 percent reliable source of back up power, particularly at our headquarters facility on Macadam Avenue in Portland. Everything for the Emergency Alert System links through our main building and if power is lost and our primary generator is unable to function for any reason the entire State is affected.

OPB has four generators that run on diesel – two in Portland, and one each in Bend and Corvallis. OPB's primary generator in Portland is 25 years old, is used only in emergencies or power outages, averaging once a year.

Our second generator located in Healy Heights in Portland is 15 years old, and is used on average 3 times a year. Our generator located in the Bend area is 2 years old, and is used usually 3 times a year. Our generator located in the Corvallis area is 43 years old, and is used usually 3 times a year.

Due to the age, size and magnitude of these generators and the lack of regular usage, the diesel fuel sits in fuel tanks for extended periods of time. Some of it will be there for years, rather than months. It must be stable, free of moisture and sludge.

Regular diesel fuel is reliable and stable. Years of experience indicate that regular diesel stored in tanks for very long periods of time works fine.

Caterpillar, the world's leading manufacturer of diesel engines, recommends against using B5 (5 percent biodiesel by volume) as it may soften, degrade, or leak from some types of elastomers used in seals and hoses.

There are significant uncertainties about the longevity and stability of biodiesel. We believe that taking this chance is not a good idea for the State or OPB. It's imperative at that critical moment when our emergency generator is needed that it will start and maintain continuous service – for hours or days, if necessary.



We respectfully ask this committee to amend HB 2860 with a provision that allows an exemption from biodiesel requirements for emergency generators used by broadcasters. Our request is contained in the (-1) amendment.

We thank Chair Bailey, Rep. Tim Freeman and Oregon Health and Sciences University for working with us on this issue and for supporting this friendly amendment.

This important exemption will increase the odds that when the State and its citizens need OPB, we will be there for them.

Thank for the opportunity to testify today, and we are happy to answer any questions you have.