



**Testimony on House Bill 3448
Submitted by Oregon Public Broadcasting
House Energy and Environment Committee
March 14, 2013**

Chair Bailey, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) to submit written testimony on House Bill 3448, which as you know, is a rewrite of House Bill 2860.

We strongly support this bill that exempts from biodiesel requirements facilities that store more than 50 gallons of diesel fuel for use in emergency power generation. OPB and other broadcasters use diesel generators for power back up, especially to provide emergency communications when necessary. This is a critical emergency response function of OPB and other Oregon broadcasters.

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 La Grande, 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 for the Emergency Alert System. 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 be

more than just without electricity, they'd be completely 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 radio as part of their emergency supplies. Were Oregon to experience a major earthquake, radio would likely be the only lifeline.

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 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 three times a year. Our generator located in the Bend area is two years old, and is used usually three times a year. Our generator located in the Corvallis area is 43 years old, and is used usually three 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 bio-diesel. 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 thank Chair Bailey, Rep. Debbie Boone, Rep. Tim Freeman and Oregon Health and Sciences University for working with us on this issue.

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