

Power shortages predicted for decade

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Pacific Northwest can expect electricity shortages every year for more than a decade unless it rains more than usual, predict the region's utilities.

The "grim" forecast was released Monday by the planning office of the Pacific Northwest Utilities Conference Committee, an organization of 120 public and private utilities in Washington, Oregon and parts of northern Idaho and western Montana.

"It's a grim picture," said David J. Lewis, director of the planning office. "It's getting worse."

Unless there is above-average rainfall to boost hydroelectric supplies, the study says the Northwest will fail to meet its power needs in each of the 11 years between July 1, 1980, and June 30, 1991.

The study predicts an annual energy growth of about 3.4 percent, requir-

ing an additional 7,000 megawatts of electricity by 1991.

But only 5,000 megawatts of new energy are planned by then to meet growth requirements, the study said.

For comparison, Lewis said 1,000 megawatts is the amount of power used by the city of Seattle.

"Comparisons of the 1980 forecast with those of the past three years reveal some alarming trends," Lewis said.

"Since the 1977 forecast, the maximum energy deficiency for any one year has grown steadily from just under 2,000 to over 4,000 average megawatts."

"We're either going to have a high probability of

being short or we're going to have to redouble conservation and bring in new resources," he said.

The forecast takes electrical demand estimates from each utility in the region and uses them in an economic and mathematical model that includes projections for population growth, income and the prices of oil, gas and electricity, Lewis said.

The major source of new Northwest electricity in the next decade is nuclear plants under construction by the Washington Public Power Supply System — three at Hanford near Richland, Wash., and two at Satsop near Aberdeen, Wash.

"Any further delays in

those plants is just going to make us worse off," Lewis said.

Lewis says the forecast does not count on any power from two proposed nuclear plants at Pebble Springs, Ore., but does count on power from one of two nuclear plants planned by Puget Sound Power & Light on the Skagit River.

Puget Power deferred plans for the project after Skagit County residents voted their opposition last fall.

The forecast also anticipates power from two coal-fired plants at Colstrip in eastern Montana, windmills planned near Goldendale, Wash., and a wood-waste plant near Kettle Falls, Wash.

Lewis said Northwest states have already started discussing allocation plans to deal with the shortage.

Energy