

Slides wreck Baker power house

By GEORGE GEASEY

Massive slides roared down on the Lower Baker Dam at Concrete early today, virtually destroying the power house and causing damage conservatively estimated at more than a million dollars.

Two men working in the power house fled by boat when the first slide struck about 4 a.m. today. They were identified as George Theodoratus and K. R. Hicks. As the mud and rock slide roared down from a mountain towering 300 feet to the east over the power house, the two men shut off machinery and took to the boat, kept there for emergency use. They escaped unharmed.

Other slides roared down later and apparently took most of the power house with them. Spokesmen for Puget Sound Power and Light Co., operators of the dam and power house, said the roof and walls of the structure had collapsed and its machinery was covered with mud. PSPL officials at Bellevue estimated damage at a million dollars and probably more.

Power company officials said the Lower Baker dam was not endangered by the slide. A distance of 200 to 300 yards separates the slide area from the dam.

BIG REPAIR JOB

Repairs will take months, they told the Skagit Valley Herald. Meanwhile, Puget Power will try to activate the Upper Baker Dam and its power-

house. The upper Baker facilities, at the opposite end of Baker Lake to the north cannot be used as a power generating source until a new transmission line is erected to replace one taken out by this morning's slides. The new line will have to span the slide area and connect with lines to a switching station at Sedro-Woolley, PSPL officials explained.

Today's slides did not interrupt Puget Power service. The bulk of power generated by the utility is coming north from

a Renton switching station via lines from Beverly Park to Sedro-Woolley.

Heavy weekend rains probably caused today's massive slides, company officials said. Earlier this year, after a period of heavy winter rainfall, the danger of slides became evident in the Lower Baker Dam area. Several smaller slides occurred, the PSPL sent repair crew and slide experts to the area. Company officials said they believed the danger had been overcome.

Les Visten, a deputy for the Skagit County Sheriff's Department, reached the slide scene late this morning and said it appeared that the huge slides had gone right through the middle of the power house.

At Burlington, Cleon Cornish, dispatcher for Puget Power, said all reports indicated the slides were "tremendous."



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MASSIVE SLIDE HITS STANDING REMAINS OF OLDER SECTION AT LOWER BAKER POWER HOUSE, THEN

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ENTIRE SECTION IS REDUCED TO RUBBLE AS SLIDE TEARS THROUGH STRUCTURE, PUSHING ITS RUBBLE INTO CHASM BENEATH LOWER BAKER DAM.

(Photos by Les Vestin)