



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc.

# Update



August 2010



## A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Dan Laws

*“I am a man, just like Tiger Woods is a man.”*

The rain has been great! All across the Rio Grande service territory, grass is green and water has been running. When you live in dry West Texas, the rain is such a blessing and always welcome. Unfortunately, there are some inconveniences with the rain that are, shall we say...less welcome. Power outages are one of the inconveniences.

There is always a temptation when you are sitting in the dark, the heat, without water and are unable to make a phone call, to believe the Cooperative and its employees are uncaring or unconcerned. In fact, a recent complaint to the Public Utility Commission of Texas actually leveled that accusation. It isn't true, of course. I understand how members could come to that conclusion, but rest assured, we do care...we are concerned.

So, you might say, “If that is true, why doesn't the Cooperative make repairs that prevent outages?” The answer is, “We do!” Every day, work is undertaken to improve reliability. We do not want any member to have an outage, but there are conditions beyond our control.

Often, members will compare their experience with Rio Grande to what they have had with another electric utility by which they have been served. That comparison makes sense, right? It's human nature to do so, but, do the comparisons really tell you anything about whether the Cooperative and its employees are doing their job? For example, I can tell you, “I am a man, just like Tiger Woods is a man.” However, I truly regret I can't play golf like he can. I doubt anyone reading this article would expect me to perform like Woods. I lack some basic skills and training to be a competitor.

In a similar way, Rio Grande can't always perform like other electric utilities, simply because there are some things that impede us, that don't impact others providing the same service. We have rough rugged terrain, an enormous service territory, extreme weather conditions, on occasion, and a myriad of other factors that may not be readily apparent.

An example of another issue that makes Rio Grande different is span length. When you live in town, span length (the distance from one pole to the next) is one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet. In Rio Grande's service area, a typical span length is 400 feet. You might wonder what difference that makes. When stormy weather is in the area with high winds, it makes a lot of difference. Our lines are not protected from the wind by structures, like they are in town. And, because the span length is much longer than in town, high winds can do more damage.

So, why don't we add more poles to the line and close up those long span lengths? Money! It costs more money and our only source of revenue is you. Our employees have the skill level to make our lines as reliable as any. Our engineering staff has the skill level to design line that is as reliable as any line built anywhere. But, the big question is, can you afford it? It is a balancing act to provide as much reliability as possible, at a price you, the consumer/member, can afford to pay.

Every person associated with Rio Grande Electric Cooperative wants your power to stay on 24/7. To have the power fail increases our expenses, makes you mad and works our employees hard. Rest assured, we are continually making improvements, but we always have to consider cost; not because we are trying to hold on to money, but because the money comes from you. That's **Your Home Team Advantage!**