



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Update



February 2016



A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Dan Laws

We're Prepared, And You Should Be, Too.

The year is off to a good start! No ice storms so far, but we have had some harsh wind that has caused some outages. We have staged materials around the service territory in anticipation of potential ice storms, and have all hands ready to respond. No matter how prepared we are, storms are going to do damage. We know what an inconvenience it is to have your power out... especially on a cold night. Rest assured, if it should go out, we will be there to restore it as quickly as possible.

We are particularly concerned about those who need electric energy for medical equipment support. If you are using devices you are depending on for life support, please make sure we know about it. Personnel will flag your account, so that dispatchers can let linemen know of your situation. The Cooperative maintains a list of folks affected in this way. When power is off, we will do our best to prioritize folks with medical needs. In some cases, the best we will be able to do is advise you to take a loved one to shelter elsewhere.

In the middle of freezing snow and ice, it can be very difficult to locate problems on the line. Linemen oftentimes find themselves with practically no visibility on roads with steep drop offs, in mountainous terrain. This makes for slow going, and can significantly impede repair times. In such cases, we may not be able to restore power before the battery life of a medical device is exceeded. Take time to register with us so we can know about your needs. If you have a neighbor that is not registered, help them do so.

There are many things that essentially are done behind the scenes to improve reliability, while controlling costs. For example; the Cooperative employs four mechanics to maintain the fleet and affect repairs. Our mechanics are outfitted with state-of-the-art trucks equipped with everything needed, in order to make most repairs in the field. They have a welder, air compressor, hoist and lift system, oil and oil change equipment, as well as waste oil storage and the customary tools.

When power is out, there is no time to obtain wreckers, and, in fact, in many instances where our trucks go, a wrecker wouldn't be able to get to them. In addition, the small communities we serve around don't have the mechanical expertise to work on the specialized equipment RGEC purchases to build and maintain lines. For these reasons, it is less expensive to do this work in-house. It also saves time. It is my experience that when repairs are made by our own employees, they're better. I say a lot about our linemen, but they depend heavily on rolling stock to do their job and need the support of good mechanics. We have four of the best!

There are other departments I need to make you aware of, and will in future articles. In the meantime, we will work diligently to keep the lights on. As always, we appreciate your patience with us as we work through power problems.



*Happy Valentine's Day from all of us at
Rio Grande Electric Co-op!*



To be updated annually, or as medical conditions change.



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative
Critical Care Medical Form

Electric Account Number: _____ Meter # _____

Name of Account Holder: _____

Name of Critical Care Person: _____

Relationship to Account Holder: Self Spouse Parent Child Renter

Other, please specify _____

Contact Information: Please include **both day and evening numbers.**

Telephone number(s) of Account Holder: _____

Telephone number(s) of Critical Care Person or live-in caregiver, if different than Account Holder:

To be completed by physician – Please type

Description of patient’s medical condition: _____

Critical medical equipment at the residence requiring electric power for operation: _____

Name of Physician: _____

Name of Medical Facility at which Physician Practices: _____

Physician’s mailing address: _____

Physician’s Phone Number: _____

Note To Physician: With regard to planned power outages, Rio Grande Electric Cooperative (RGEC) will attempt to contact your patient requiring electrically-powered medical equipment in advance so that they can make arrangements for transport to another location, if necessary. However, because of the wide variety of circumstances under which (unplanned) power outages occur, RGEC cannot guarantee restoration time. If your patient has critically important medical equipment that requires electric power for operation, they should have a back-up source of power available at their residence.

Signature of Licensed Medical Doctor

Date Signed

Are You A “Critical Care” Member?



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative maintains a list of those requiring electrical power to operate specialized life-sustaining medical equipment. We call it the Critical Care or Life Support Registry, and it is important that you provide us with current information every year, or whenever your condition or contact information changes. The form on the preceding page should be completed by you and your doctor, and returned to RGEC, if you are one who requires such medical equipment.

Depending on weather conditions or the extent of damage to the electric system, accurate restoration times may be difficult to predict. We'll do our best to give you all available information to help you make decisions. Still, the possibility exists that some customers could be without power for an extended period. Everyone, but especially those dependent on medical equipment, should plan ahead for such situations. Backup generators, extra batteries, flashlights, non-electric telephones and cellular phones are just a few items you should consider obtaining, to provide for your life support and comfort, in the event of an extended outage.

Before our crews interrupt electric service to safely perform scheduled maintenance, we will make every effort to inform you about the planned outage. In order for us to do so, it is important that you provide us with current telephone (including cellular) numbers. This applies to all members -- not only those in the Co-op's Critical Care Registry. When time permits, RGEC may also notify the public of planned interruptions through local or area newspapers, and the RGEC web site and Facebook page.

Important reminders. Anyone who requires the use of medical equipment should have an alternate source of electric power on hand, such as a battery backup system, and should consider investing in a portable emergency generator. It is important to follow all safety guidelines when installing or operating a portable generator. RGEC does not provide generators. It is your responsibility to plan for and acquire a generator, if needed.

When the power goes out, cordless phones usually will not work. However, corded land line telephones should continue to operate normally. If you have a cell phone, you should keep it fully charged. Remember to program the Co-op's telephone number in your phone's directory for easy access. All members should keep meter/account numbers handy for quick reference in the event of an outage. RGEC provides refrigerator magnets which contain spaces for recording meter and account numbers. If you have misplaced yours, please call and we will provide you with another one.

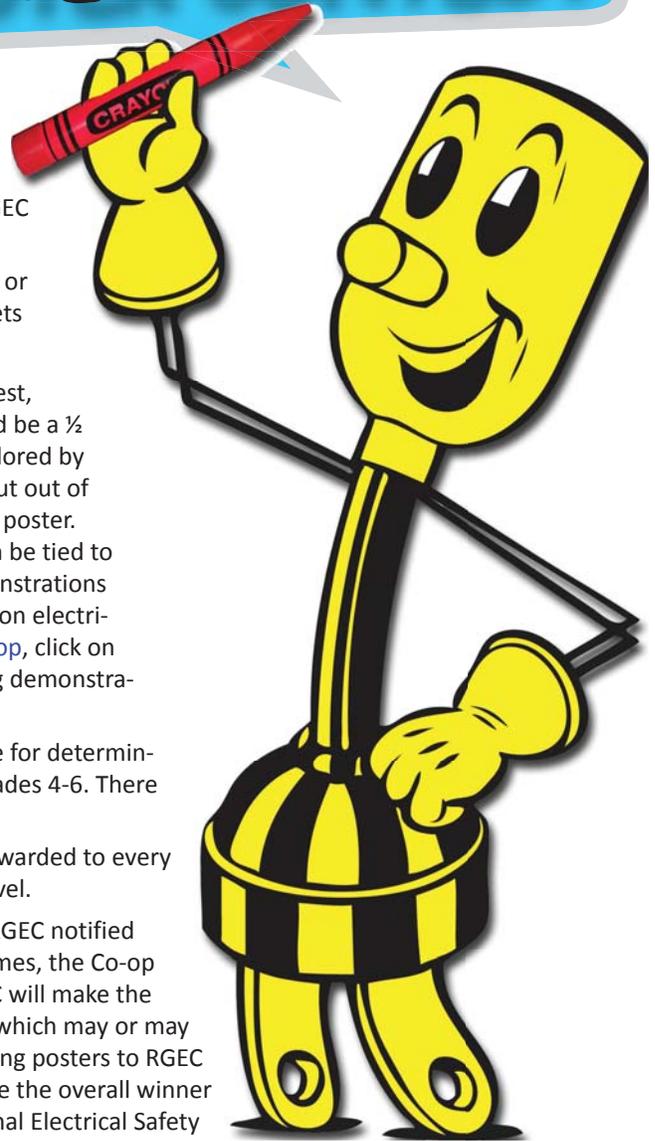
If you or a family member relies on life support equipment at home, we recommend that you contact your local emergency management office, ambulance service, sheriff's or police department to see if they would want to have that information for their records. That way, in the event of a power outage requiring someone in your home to be evacuated to another location, the emergency responders will have advance information about the type of medical support needed for the transfer.

Experts agree that every person utilizing electrically powered medical equipment needs to be proactive in their own care. They have to be prepared in case of emergency situations -- their lives depend on it. Medicare provides equipment, but does not provide backup power supplies for electrically-powered medical equipment. Those with electrically-powered medical equipment need to have contingency plans in case of any power outage or natural disaster. Backup batteries, emergency generators, extra oxygen, a supply of fresh water and non-perishable food items are but a few of the things to consider before an emergency situation arises. For information on available services to help you prepare for an emergency in your specific area, call 2-1-1.

Unavoidable power outages do happen, despite the investment of millions of dollars each year to strengthen and maintain the electric system. Sudden severe storms, vehicular accident damage, tree limbs, animal contact, equipment failure, or other problems can interfere with your electric service and disrupt the flow of power to individual locations or to entire areas. The Co-op has emergency response plans in place and is ready at all times to begin restoring service as swiftly and safely as conditions allow. But, our members must also do their part to prepare for the eventuality of a power outage, for their own health, comfort, and safety.

For emergency preparedness tips, click on the Storm Center tab of our website, www.riogrande.coop. There, you'll also find special instructions/preparations from the FDA for those with critical care needs.

NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY POSTER CONTEST



Eligibility: Open to ANY student in grades 1st- 6th, in any county RGEC serves*. Parents/Guardians do not need to be members of RGEC.

How To Participate: Schools should call 1-800-749-1509 ext. 1106 or email sede@rgec.coop to enroll in the contest. (Information packets were distributed to school districts last month.)

How The Contest Works: Once their school is enrolled in the contest, students will illustrate principles of electrical safety. Posters should be a ½ sheet of white poster board. Art should be original, and drawn/colored by the student (not parents), and may not be computer-generated, cut out of magazines, etc. Students may not paste cotton, beads, etc. on the poster. We encourage teachers to make this an in-class project, which can be tied to the study of electricity. (RGEC provides free electrical safety demonstrations to schools throughout our service territory. For more information on electrical safety demonstrations, visit our web site at www.riogrande.coop, click on "Safety Demo" on the "Extras" tab. Check out the awesome arcing demonstration video on this page, too!

School Level Judging: Each participating school will be responsible for determining the best poster in each of the two divisions, grades 1-3 and grades 4-6. There can only be one winner per school in each division.

Certificates Of Participation: Certificates of Participation will be awarded to every student who participates in the contest at the individual school level.

Notify RGEC Of Winners: Poster judging must be completed and RGEC notified of winners by **Friday, April 15, 2016**. Once notified of winners' names, the Co-op will provide each school with two school winner certificates. RGEC will make the announcement of individual school winners to local newspapers, which may or may not elect to print the photograph. Each school submits their winning posters to RGEC for judging against all other individual school winners to determine the overall winner in each division. The posters will be judged in May, which is National Electrical Safety Month, and winners will be notified shortly thereafter.

Prizes: The (overall) winner in each division will have his/her poster incorporated in the book cover design of covers provided by RGEC for the upcoming school year, and each winner will receive a \$50 Wal-Mart Gift Card. RGEC will publish the names and photos of the two overall winners in this magazine, which is distributed to Cooperative members (approx. 6,000) in 18 counties in Texas and 2 counties in New Mexico.

Every kid who learns to be safe
around electricity is a WINNER!

Member Involvement

Survey This Month

Return It For A Chance To Win A \$200 RGEC Credit

Do you have what it takes to lead Rio Grande Electric Co-op? Here's your chance.

The 2016 Member Involvement Survey will be included in this month's billing statement. There are a couple of levels of leadership listed on the survey form, and a brief explanation of each. Just indicate the level at which you are willing to be involved in the management of the Co-op.

As a member-owned organization, it is your right and your responsibility to participate in the management of RGEC. The survey serves as a tool to find out who is willing to do so.

As an added incentive, one member who returns a completed survey by the March 2 deadline will receive a credit of \$200 on their account. This is done by conducting a drawing from among all completed surveys received by the deadline.

Opportunities To Serve. Advisory Committee and Board of Directors.

To serve on the Advisory Committee for your area, one of your fellow members, whose term is expiring (3 years), must select you as their replacement. To qualify, you need only have an active membership and be willing to give up a few hours of your time twice a year for regular meetings, or as required by RGEC bylaws. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to create a forum in which the directors, management, and members may discuss problems and concerns that affect the membership at large. Committee members are treated to a meal and receive mileage to attend meetings, if they so desire.

Members of the board of directors are selected by majority vote of the membership and serve 3-year terms. To qualify, candidates must have a residence in the director district for which a nomination is sought, and must be free of any conflict of interest. (A complete list of qualifications can be found in the RGEC bylaws, available at www.riogrande.coop) To serve, a member must be willing to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, alternating between Brackettville and Fort Stockton, Texas.

If elected, a director must be willing to spend the time needed to review and become familiar with RGEC's operations. This includes bylaws, policies, tariffs, and applicable corporate law, as well as materials sent out periodically by management. In addition, you, along with fellow directors, would be called upon to make decisions regarding policy and other issues as they relate to the director's fiduciary responsibility. Directors do not receive a salary, but are eligible to receive per diem of \$400 per day, plus mileage, if they so desire.

Previously, there was an area on the survey for those interested in serving on nominating committees. This is no longer the case, as there are no longer nominating committees. Beginning with the election cycle this year, any member who wants to run for a seat on the board may do so, as long as he or she meets the eligibility criteria set forth in Article IV of the RGEC Bylaws.

Complete Contact Information. Even if time or distance factors prevent you from serving on an advisory committee or the board, please take a few moments to update the bottom portion of the form. It helps us keep your contact information current, in the event that it becomes necessary to communicate with you about your electric service or account information. Be sure to include mobile phone numbers and email addresses, as well.

Credit On Account Drawing. Remember that you need not show interest in serving on an advisory committee or the board to be eligible for the drawing, but we do ask that you complete the bottom portion of the form. Incomplete forms and those received after the March 2 deadline will not be included in the drawing.



Consider A Co-op Career

Have you ever considered a career with Rio Grande Electric Cooperative? There are good jobs waiting for the right people. We post vacancies as they occur under the employment tab at www.riogrande.coop.

It takes over 150 people in a vast array of positions to keep Rio Grande operating smoothly. As of press time, the following positions were posted on the Rio Grande website:

Groundman or Lineman Brackettville
Customer Service Representative I Dell City
Lineman Dell City

Lineman El Paso
Part-Time Dispatcher Ft. Stockton

What kind of people does Rio Grande hire? Naturally, the Co-op looks for highly qualified individuals, those with education or experience in the position for which they are applying, but that doesn't mean that RGEC only hires those with degrees. Quite the contrary. Many of RGEC's tenured employees have worked their way up the ranks to leadership positions.

Meet some of RGEC's employees.



Brackettville Warehouse Coordinator Vicki Daulton has also held positions in accounting and customer service. Upon transferring to Warehouse Coordinator, she helped in implementing the barcoding of parts and equipment for quick and accurate access to the parts RGEC's linemen and others rely on. In her free time, she enjoys riding motorcycles and competitive shooting with her husband. *(Photo - GM/CEO Dan Laws & Vicki)*



Joe Cruz is a Journeyman Lineman in the Carrizo Springs Operations Area. Being a Journeyman means he has reached the "top of the heap" among the ranks of linemen. In his years with RGEC, he's seen lots of changes, most of which have been related to technology. When he's not on the job, Joe enjoys hunting and other outdoor activities with his family.



Veronica Madrid is the Administrative Assistant in the Ft. Stockton office. She began her career as a Customer Service Representative. She oversees the activities of Customer Service Representatives in the Ft. Stockton and Alpine areas. Veronica is the consummate professional and she instills these qualities in others, as well. She is the mom of two daughters, and enjoys spending time with them and her husband.



The Alpine Operation Area's Jordan Gusky is a relative newcomer to RGEC's ranks. He began his career in May 2015, as a groundman, and was recently promoted to Lineman Apprentice I. He also holds another new title--that of Daddy. Jordan and his wife welcomed little Irene Louise Gusky October 22, 2015.

Why should I apply for a position with RGEC? In addition to having outstanding insurance and retirement benefits, Rio Grande provides training. For groundmen/linemen, that training is through RGEC's own apprenticeship program. All program costs such as books and materials are covered by the Co-op. For office workers and others, it may mean a course in the use of specialized software. Additionally, employees are afforded the opportunity for supervisory training and advancement. To date 41% of RGEC employees have successfully completed the required classes, and have been awarded Supervisory Certificates through the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association.

What is the advantage to Co-op members? Rio Grande strives to hire, train, and retain the best, most qualified individuals available to carry out the business of the Cooperative. This means highly capable people to serve you, the member-owners of Rio Grande Electric Cooperative.

New Warehouse Facility

Those of you who have had occasion to travel Hwy. 90 going through Brackettville may have wondered what all the monster equipment is doing in the fenced yard area at RGEN. At present, contractors are creating the foundation for what will become a new warehouse facility.

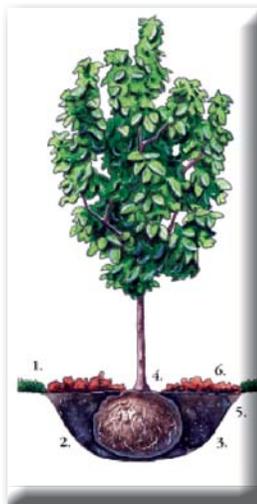
When the new warehouse is completed, the existing warehouse space will eventually be transitioned into offices to meet the needs of the Cooperative's growing corporate staff.



Left: Architect's rendering of the new warehouse being constructed at RGEN's Brackettville location. In addition to the warehouse, the new facility will house multi-person offices for linemen and technical services personnel, and mechanic's bays for fleet maintenance. The building was designed by RGEN's Architectural Engineer, Ferdie Bandala, who also designed the Dell City office.

Now Is The Time To Plant Shade Trees

It may still be chilly outside, but this is the best time of year to plant deciduous trees for future shade. "Deciduous" trees are those which drop their leaves in winter. The National Arbor Day Foundation gives the following instructions for getting your new shade trees planted properly and off to a strong start:



1. Call Before You Dig - Several days before planting, call the national 8-1-1 hotline to have underground utilities located.

2. Handle with Care - Always lift tree by the root ball. Keep roots moist until planting

3. Digging a Proper Hole - Dig 2 to 5 times wider than the diameter of the root ball with sloping sides to allow for proper root growth.

4. Planting Depth - The trunk flare should sit slightly above ground level and the top most roots should be buried 1 to 2 inches.

5. Filling the Hole - Backfill with native soil unless it's all clay. Tamp in soil gently to fill large air spaces.

6. Mulch - Allow 1 to 2 inches of clearance between the trunk and the mulch. Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches deep.



Shade trees make outdoor living spaces comfortable in the hot summer months.



Board Action

RIO GRANDE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. Summary of Board Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2015

A meeting of the Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Directors was held at the Headquarters office in Brackettville, Kinney County, Texas at 8:00 a. m. December 16, 2015. The following directors were present for the meeting: Jimmy Ballew, Mark Daugherty, Tim Edwards, Stephen Haynes, Rowdy Holmsley, Jan Metcalf, Margarita Nelson, Priscilla Parsons, Keith Richardson and Bill White. Also present for the meeting were General Manager/CEO Daniel G. Laws, Cooperative Attorney Lea Ream of Davidson, Troilo, Ream, & Garza, Director of Human Resources Martha Gerardo, Director of Administrative Services Theresa Quiroz, Director of Accounting and Finance Shawn Stanley and Executive Assistant To The GM/CEO Sonya Cruz.

Approved	November 18, 2015 Board Minutes, As Presented
Heard	Financial Reports
Approved	2015 Write-Offs In The Amount Of \$44,667.09
Approved	Adjustment To The 2016 Salary Administration Plan To Keep Pace With The Employee Cost Index, As Posted By The Department of Labor, Presented By Director Of Human Resources, Martha Gerardo
Heard	Administrative Services Update By Director Of Administrative Services Theresa Quiroz
Approved	Contract For Wholesale Power Supply With LCRA To The ERCOT Delivery Points To Begin January 1, 2018
Approved	Daniel G. Laws, GM/CEO and Shawn Stanley, Director Of Accounting & Finance As Voting Delegate And Alternate For NRECA's Annual Meeting (CFC, NRTC, NCSC And NISC)
Reviewed	Board Policy 1.1.1 Functions Of The Board Of Directors by Stephen Haynes
Approved	2016 Budget As Presented
Heard	General Manager/CEO Report
Heard	Committee Reports
Approved	GM-CEO/Director Expenses
Approved	October New/Revoked Memberships
Reviewed	Check Register And Arrears Report
Adjourned	2:09 P.M.

Note: The summary above is provided so that members can follow the activities of the board, and is not intended to be exhaustive. Should you wish to know more detail on a particular item or items, please contact the director for your district or the General Manager/CEO's office.

Need Internet?

Satellite Internet Beams Reopen

Some areas which had been closed to new satellite internet have reopened to new business. This is according to the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, through which RGEC provides Exede Satellite Internet.

Those who are Co-op members in the Brackettville, Del Rio, Ft. Stockton, and Marathon areas, to name a few, may now get Exede Satellite Internet service through RGEC's RioNet Internet Service. Call 800-749-1509 today!

Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



*Rowdy Holmsley, President P.O. Box 221 Sheffield, TX 79781	District 6 432-836-4350(H)
*Jimmy Ballew, Vice President P.O. Box 559 Brackettville, TX 78832	District 3 830-563-2869(H)
*Priscilla Parsons, Secretary P.O. Box 517 Crystal City, TX 78839	District 2 830-374-9775(H)
*Stephen Haynes, Treasurer P.O. Box 1088 Rocksprings, TX 78880	District 4 830-395-2283(H)
Warren Cude P.O. Box 1686 Ft. Stockton, TX 79735	District 8 432-395-2304 (H)
*Mark Daugherty P.O. Box 744 Alpine, TX 79831	District 7 432-345-2604 (H)
Tim Edwards P.O. Box 3012 Kent, TX 79855	District 7 432-259-3301(H)
Billy Foster P.O. Box 163 Langtry, TX 78871	District 5 432-291-3232(H)
Janice "Jan" Metcalf P.O. Box 366 Brackettville, TX 78832	District 3A 830-563-9943
*Margarita Nelson HC2 Box 53 Carrizo Springs, TX 78831	District 1 830-876-3223 (H)
M. Keith Richardson 10571 US Hwy. 62/180 Salt Flat, TX 79847	District 9 915-964-2838(H)
*William White HCR 3, 253 Packsaddle Circle Del Rio, TX 78840	District 4A 830-775-5053 (H)

Dan Laws, General Manager/CEO
P.O. Box 240, Brackettville, TX 78832
general_manager@rgec.coop 830-563-6112 (W)

* Credentialed Cooperative Director