



A Message From The COO By Theresa Quiroz

You Control Your Electric Bill

In Texas, we really only see two seasons: summer and winter...and, they usually alternate days within the same week. It seems comical, but spot-on, especially with what we have experienced these last few months. Since November, Co-op Country saw dangerously freezing temperatures, damaging rain, windstorms, and calmly warming temperatures in between. Seriously, such extreme changes in weather patterns have a greater impact on your electric bill than any other contributing factor.

Good news, everyone! You have more control than you realize, and Rio Grande Electric gives you more control than you take. Because a portion of your bill is based on the amount of electricity you use and how often you use it, you can lower your electric bill costs by monitoring the comfort(s) in your own home. To give you some ideas, heating the air and water, or clothes drying in the middle of freezing temperatures or vice versa, cooling the air and water in the middle of blistering hot temperatures will cause a big spike on your electricity bill. You can always use less to save money, but you can also install programmable thermostats, upgrade appliances and light bulbs to energy-efficient appliances, CFLs or LEDs.

However, if your household is like mine and everyone comes home for the holidays, enjoying family and friends can quickly turn into additional expenses and hospitality-induced anxiety, if the comfort of the home is lost. So, what do we do? We crank up and down the air conditioning, depending on the time of day and weather, we launder everything in the home, we cook for an army and we almost never really turn down the lights. It is all worth the effort to be able to enjoy your family and friends, right? Well then, you get your January and February electric bills and surprise! Texas weather and holiday gatherings can drive up costs for you and the Cooperative.

With all of these thoughts in mind, Rio Grande Electric wants to help by literally putting even more control in your hands with its SmartHub® mobile application. Whether you are enjoying company in the comfort of your own home or elsewhere, you can eliminate surprises on your electric bill by conserving where possible, of course, but also by subscribing to receive power usage alerts on your mobile devices by text message or email notification. This is a beautiful thing! So please do not delay. If you need help getting it set up on your mobile devices, stop by, call in, or visit our website for an instructional video. Customer Service Representatives are happy to share with you all that the SmartHub® mobile application has to offer. Of course, we also understand that payment of capital credits at this time of year certainly helps make the holiday season more enjoyable.

Rio Grande Electric serves to provide you reliable electric energy when you need it; and together, we can work to keep your energy costs as low as possible.



Eligibility: Open to ANY student in grades 1-6, in any county RGEC serves. (Parents/guardians do not need to be members of RGEC.)

Participation: Schools should call 1-800-749-1509, ext. 1106, or email sede@rgec.coop, to enroll in the contest.

Prizes: The overall winner in each division (grades 1-3, and grades 4-6) will have his/her poster incorporated in the design of the book covers RGEC provides to schools for the upcoming school year. Both overall winners will also receive a \$50 Wal-Mart Gift Card.



Every student who participates will receive a certificate, because every student who learns about electrical safety is a winner!

For additional information, contact your child's school, or the number listed above.

POWER USAGE ALERTS

Be proactive in managing your energy usage

Receive a text message or email notification for high or low power usage.
May take up to 24 hours for usage to be reported.

Visit www.riogrande.coop for information & video on setting up your alerts.

Scholarship Information



The board of directors has approved the awarding of twenty-two (22) \$1,500 scholarships for the Fall 2019 semester, to eligible students in the Co-op's 2019 scholarship competition.

12th grade (senior) students will be selected to receive the funds to assist in furthering their education at a fully accredited college, community college, university, or vocational/trade school. Former scholarship recipients may reapply for a Continuing Education scholarship, if funds are available, and upon proof of acceptable GPA. Please see complete details on the Cooperative's website.

Information and registration packets were distributed to school districts in January. The forms and rules are also available on RGEC's website, www.riogrande.coop, under the "Extras" menu tab.

It is a very simple application form, consisting of questions about the student's parent/legal guardian Co-op membership, such as address, phone, and RGEC account number. The student must then complete a 1-page entry describing why they are applying for the scholarship, and, if selected, how they will use their education to benefit rural America.

Completed entries must be postmarked by April 12, 2019. Winners will be selected by an impartial panel of judges, in a blind judging, without knowledge of the student's family name, director district, or RGEC operations area. Scholarships may be presented during the students' end-of-year awards ceremony or graduation. If selected to receive a scholarship, students must sign the acceptance form and return it to RGEC's corporate offices in Brackettville, Texas by June 28, 2019.



Substation Upgrades



Pinto Creek is the newest in RGEC's complement of substations. Located in northwestern Kinney County, this state-of-the-art substation was interconnected with the transmission line (on/about) January 25, and was placed in service immediately.

At present, it is providing service to an oil/gas member, requiring a large load.

The RGEC Board of Directors toured the new substation in December, just prior to its completion. Board President Billy Foster said, "RGEC is gaining a quality substation that will not only be able to carry a large load, but also provide redundancy back to the native system."

The upgraded Devils River Substation in Val Verde County is scheduled to be re-energized on or about April 4. This substation's primary function is to serve an oil/gas pumping station. It will, however, benefit a number of members in the region by providing redundancy. This means that power can be routed from an alternate source, should the need arise.

The new transformer was delivered December 10. Weighing in at 105,000 lbs., it required the use of a massive crane and skilled workers to delicately place it in the correct position.

Coming in at a cost of about \$1.95 mil., the substation was entirely paid for through Contribution In Aid Of Construction funds by the energy company which will be utilizing power from it.

Photo by RGEC Line Superintendent Danny Samaniego.

Right: Placing the Devils River Substation transformer.



Deferred Payment of RGEC Bills For Federal Employees Affected By Governmental Shutdown



CEO Roger Andrade announced January 14, that Rio Grande Electric Cooperative will allow government employees, whose paychecks are suspended during the current government shutdown, to defer payment of up to two (2) Rio Grande Electric Co-op bills, until such time as governmental pay resumes, or March 21, whichever comes first.

Those wanting to request this delayed payment option, must apply prior to a bill becoming in arrears, by contacting their local RGEC office, completing a short promissory form, and providing a government pay-stub as evidence of need.

No interest or penalty will accrue, as long as the terms of the delayed payment agreement are met.

Are You A Rio Grande Leader?

Member Involvement Survey Lets Us Know



The 2019 Member Involvement Survey will be included in this month's billing statement. If you have leadership qualities, you should consider putting them to use serving your fellow Co-op members. There are a several 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 leadership 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 1 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 Committees, Nominating Committees 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.

Nominating committees are tasked with selecting qualified candidates for the director election. Though these important committees only meet

once, their importance to the health and well-being of the Co-op can't be overstated. Committee members are selected by the advisory committees, based, in part, on response to the Member Involvement Survey. So, if you have an interest in helping select board candidates, be sure to indicate your willingness to serve on the nominating committee for your area.

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.

You could win a \$200 RGEC Credit On Account

Return the COMPLETED Member Involvement Survey by March 1, to be entered in a drawing for a \$200 RGEC Credit On Account.

In order to be eligible, you must complete all applicable spaces on the bottom of the form. Please be sure to include daytime contact numbers such as work and mobile numbers.

We use the information you provide to update your contact information, in order to notify you of issues which could affect your electric service, such as planned outages.

Taking care of "Critical Care" members



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 following 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. Back up 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 crews interrupt electric service to safely perform maintenance, we will make every effort to inform you about the planned outage. This is why it is important that you provide us with all current telephone 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. For emergency preparedness tips, see the Storm Center at www.riogrande.coop. There, you'll also find special instructions/preparations from the FDA for those with critical care needs.

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

If you, or a family member, rely on life support equipment, we recommend contacting your local emergency management office/law enforcement/EMS 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 first responders will know what 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 electric 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 a few of the things to consider before an emergency arises. For 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 accidents, tree limbs, animal contact, equipment failure, or other problems can interfere with electric service and disrupt the flow of power. 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.



To be completed annually, or as medical conditions warrant.

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

This form is also available under the Forms tab at www.riogrande.coop



Summary of Board Meeting Minutes December 19, 2018

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 19, 2018. The following directors were present for the meeting: Sandra Archuleta, Ellery Aufdengarten, Jamie Ballew, Warren Cude, Tim Edwards, Billy Foster, Rowdy Holmsley, Jan Metcalf, Priscilla Parsons, Keith Richardson, and Cody Whitehead. Also present for the meeting were Chief Executive Officer Roger Andrade, Chief Operating Officer Theresa Quiroz, Chief Financial Officer Shawn Stanley, Department Specialist Nydia Lopez, and Corporate Attorney Lea Ream of Davidson, Troilo, Ream, & Garza.

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| Approved | November 14, 2018 Board Minutes, As Presented |
| Heard | Financial Reports |
| Approved | 2018 Write-Offs In The Amount Of \$46,477.65 |
| Heard | Annual Director Duties And Liability Review By Corporate Attorney Lea Ream |
| Approved | Resolution Authorizing CEO To Proceed With LCRA Purchase Agreement |
| Approved | Resolution Authorizing CEO To Submit And Certify Any And All RGEC Data In The RD Apply Intake System With Rural Utilities Service |
| Approved | 2019 Salary Administration By Chief Executive Officer Roger Andrade |
| Selected | Voting Delegate And Alternate For The NRECA 2019 Annual Meeting |
| Approved | Board Policy 1.1.7 – Code Of Conduct For Directors By Keith Richardson, As Amended |
| Reviewed | Safety & Health Program And Safety Trends |
| Heard | Executive Report |
| Heard | Audit Committee Report |
| Approved | CEO and Director Expenses |
| Approved | November New/Revoked Memberships |
| Reviewed | Check Register And Arrears Report |
| Adjourned | 2:21 PM |

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 CEO's office.

*Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc. es un proveedor y empleador que ofrece igualdad de oportunidades.*

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| *Billy Foster, President
P.O. Box 163
Langtry, TX 78871 | District 5
432-291-3232 |
| *Priscilla Parsons, Vice President
P.O. Box 517
Crystal City, TX 78839 | District 2
830-374-9775 |
| *Tim Edwards, Secretary
P.O. Box 3012
Kent, TX 79855 | District 7
432-259-3301 |
| *Rowdy Holmsley, Treasurer
P.O. Box 221
Sheffield, TX 79781 | District 6
432-836-4350 |
| Sandra Archuleta
PO Box 221
Dell City, TX 79837 | District 9
915-964-2464 |
| Ellery Aufdengarten
P.O. Box 342
Fort Davis, TX 79734 | District 7
432-556-2568 |
| *Jamie Ballew
P.O. Box 559
Brackettville, TX 78832 | District 3
830-563-2869 |
| *Warren Cude
P.O. Box 1686
Ft. Stockton, TX 79735 | District 8
432-395-2304 |
| *Janice "Jan" Metcalf
P.O. Box 366
Brackettville, TX 78832 | District 3A
830-563-9047 |
| Cody Whitehead
10 Larkwood Lane
Del Rio, TX 78840 | District 4
830-719-5630 |
| *M. Keith Richardson
10571 US Hwy. 62/180
Salt Flat, TX 79847 | District 9
915-964-2838 |
| Vacancy | District 1 |
| Vacancy | District 4A |

Roger Andrade, CEO
P.O. Box 1509, Brackettville, TX 78832
general_manager@rgec.coop 830-563-6112 (W)

* Credentialed Cooperative Director