



POWER-GRAM

A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Left: Photo by Adam Raulerson

**March
2022**



Cloudcroft

575-682-2521

Alto

575-336-4550

Carrizozo

575-648-2352

www.ocec-inc.com

LOBBY HOURS

8 AM - 4 PM

Monday - Friday

**TO REPORT AN
OUTAGE, CALL
1-800-548-4660**

**FOR BALANCE
INFORMATION
OR TO PAY YOUR
BILL, CALL
1-844-846-2695**

Surge Protection 101

A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can damage electronic devices and equipment in your home.

One of the most common causes of a power surge is lightning. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere—unfortunately in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms. After a big lightning storm, you may want to inspect all surge protectors in your home. If they have taken a hit, they may not provide the proper protection and should be replaced.

Another common cause of power surges is electrical overload. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being

restored and reconnected, it's common to experience a quick surge in current. Similar to advice for a surge caused by lightning, it's best to unplug sensitive electronics during the outage—then wait to plug them back in after power is fully restored.

Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home.

Point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. But remember, not all power strips include surge protection, so read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don't overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. It may be wise to consider purchasing a battery backup UPS to be used with your more sensitive electronics to provide guaranteed power and surge protection.

Another option is a whole-home surge protector, which can help protect your home from larger, more powerful surges. In most cases, whole-home suppressors are connected to your home's service panel. OCEC has a whole-home suppressor available for purchase at our Cloudcroft, Alto and Carrizozo offices. Whole-home suppressors should always be connected by a licensed electrician, so consider the cost of installation as well.

Occasional power surges are inevitable, but by unplugging devices when you think a surge may occur and using additional levels of protection like power strips or whole-home suppressors, you can better safeguard your sensitive electronics and devices.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

When was your HVAC system last serviced? Most manufacturers recommend an annual tune up for your home's heating/cooling system. March is a great time to schedule this service so you can beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

A qualified professional can check the amount of refrigerant, accuracy of the thermostat, condition of belts and motors and other factors that can impact the efficiency of your system.

You may also be eligible for a rebate from our ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM for this service.

Source: Department of Energy

Vegetation Management Update

Crews working to trim trees and vegetation in rights-of-way are currently in the following areas and are expected to remain there for the next few weeks

- Mescalero
- Twin Forks
- East of Mayhill

OCEC reminds members that you may see vehicles, ATVs and crew members from Rogers Tree Service cutting trees near existing power lines. Vehicles will be marked with their company name and an OCEC contractor placard.

March Employment Anniversary

Jessica Gaston—Accountant II—13 years

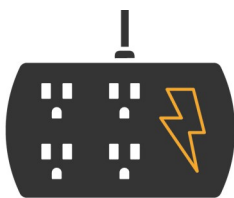
Dakota Grinder—Staking Technician—1 year

Chris Hughes—Journeyman Lineman—8 years

Adam Raulerson—Staking Technician—1 year

Kenny Vega—Equipment Operator—1 year

Julie Grinder—Chief Finance Officer—7 years



SURGE PROTECTION

Keep your electronic equipment safe.

A power surge is typically caused by lightning, changes in electrical loads, faulty wiring or damaged power lines.

Install power strips with surge protection to protect sensitive equipment.

- Easy to use (just plug them in)
- Protect electronics plugged into the device
- Must be replaced over time or after a major surge event



REMEMBER:

Not all power strips offer surge protection. Carefully read the packaging labels when purchasing.

Winter Season Disconnect Moratorium Ending

Protection from winter shut-off begins November 15, 2021. To avoid potential disconnection of service please contact the Human Services Department at 800-283-4465, or the appropriate tribal or pueblo entity for eligibility information for Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Your service will not be disconnected from November 15, 2021, through March 15, 2022, if you meet the qualifications of LIHEAP and have no past due amounts or you remain current on any settlement or installment agreement for amounts due as of November 15, 2021. Member of New Mexico tribes or pueblos who need help with translation or with other matters may contact the commission's consumer relations division at 888-427-5772, who will contact the appropriate tribal or pueblo official for assistance.

Operations on Alert with High Winds



As winds begin to pick up, red-flag warnings will be issued and OCEC will put into effect fire prevention procedures. Reclosers will be set to non-reclose so breakers operate and lines stay open at the first sign of a fault to help reduce the risk of a fire being started by electrical equipment.

This precautionary measure will rely more heavily on line patrol by operations personnel and less on automated equipment, but does come with some consequences – outages may last longer and more members could be affected. OCEC asks everyone to be patient when the longer outages occur, but hope you understand that the benefits of the extra patrol time far outweigh the risks.

Safety of Crews is a Priority

Your electricity goes out while you are home watching TV. You look outside and see OCEC crews working down the street and decide you'll go check with them to see what the problem is and how long until the power is back on.

While we understand that you want to know when your services will be restored, we ask that you call our office to report an outage and learn details about the cause and restoration times instead of speaking to crews in the field.

Their job is difficult, dangerous, and requires that they pay close attention to what they are doing. Unexpected interruptions can lead to longer outage times if multiple people stop to talk with the crews. This can also cause crew members to lose concentration on their task at hand and could potentially lead to injury or even death.

Serving members is a priority for OCEC, but so is the safety of line crews. Your understanding in this situation is greatly appreciated.