



POWERGRAM

A monthly newsletter for OCEC Members

WINTER STORM RESTORATION: A WEEK OF GRIT, TEAMWORK, AND PROGRESS

Between January 24 and 30, Otero County Electric Cooperative crews worked long hours in cold temperatures to restore power after a severe winter storm that brought heavy snow, fallen trees, and widespread damage across parts of our service territory. The storm created extremely challenging conditions, particularly in mountain areas, where snow-loaded trees continued to fall even after initial repairs were made—often taking lines back down.

At the height of the storm, as many as 8,000 meters were without power. Crews faced repeated outages as they cleared trees, rebuilt lines, and then returned to the same locations when additional trees fell. Damage assessments identified extensive system damage, including broken poles, damaged crossarms, and numerous spans of line down—especially along the Sac Peak line, which serves the Timberon area.

Restoration efforts were truly a team effort. More than 20 OCEC line personnel, 9 vegetation crew members, and 18 contract lineworkers from A.R.C. Power Line Construction worked side by side, supported by equipment operators from Batte Gravel and Penasco Gravel. Heavy equipment—including dozers, excavators, bucket trucks, and digger trucks—was mobilized to help crews gain access to remote and heavily damaged areas.

Despite freezing temperatures, difficult terrain, and long days, crews made steady progress. At one point, outages were reduced from approximately 3,000 meters to fewer than 1,400 in a single day. As conditions improved and access was gained, restoration accelerated. Power was ultimately restored to Timberon on January 30 at 8:20 p.m.—a milestone many members had been anxiously awaiting.

Throughout the entire restoration effort, safety remained the top priority. We are proud to report that crews experienced zero accidents, zero injuries, and no close calls, even while working in some of the harshest conditions of the winter.

While a small number of outages remained due to isolated damage, crews continued working in the days that followed to restore service as quickly and safely as possible. OCEC would like to thank our members for their patience, understanding, and kindness during this challenging event—and extend sincere appreciation to our employees and contractor partners whose dedication and hard work made restoration possible.



FEBRUARY CALENDAR PHOTO
submitted by Adam Raulerson

FEBRUARY 2026

CLOUDCROFT
575-682-2521

ALTO
575-336-4550

CARRIZOZO
575-648-2352

LOBBY HOURS
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MONDAY - FRIDAY

**TO REPORT AN
OUTAGE, CALL**
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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE

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

- High Rolls
- Timberon
- West Side Road area

We want to ask for your cooperation when you see crews working to keep these areas clear. This task plays a vital role in reducing fire hazards and ensuring consistent power delivery to members.

Please be aware that vegetation crews do not chip or remove dead limbs or brush after cutting. They will ensure it is not in a driveway or pathway and does not create any additional hazard. OCEC's main concern in vegetation management is powerline reliability and safety.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating—these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter.

PROTECTING OUR POWER SYSTEM FROM WILDFIRE

Wildfire risk is a reality of living and working in our area, and Otero County Electric Cooperative is taking proactive steps to help protect the infrastructure that keeps power flowing to our members.

Recently, OCEC completed a project to install fire-retardant pole wrap—Fire Mesh™ by Genics—on 150 poles along the 69 kV transmission line that runs from the Cloudcroft Substation down to the Tunnel. This critical line serves the entire mountain area around Cloudcroft, making it especially important to protect. Each pole was wrapped up to eight feet from ground level, the area most vulnerable during a wildland fire.

This project is not only effective, but also cost-efficient. The cost of installing fire-retardant wrap is far less than replacing a pole damaged or destroyed by fire—not to mention the potential outages that could result from that damage.

Managing wildfire risk is, and will continue to be, part of life for electric utilities. Conditions that contribute to more frequent and intense wildfires aren't going away anytime soon, and there's no single solution that can eliminate risk entirely. Instead, utilities must use a combination of strategies, including careful risk assessments, infrastructure maintenance, and strong vegetation management practices.

With millions of wood poles already in service, protecting the infrastructure we have makes sense. This pole-wrapping project, along with OCEC's ongoing vegetation management efforts, reflects our commitment to protecting valuable assets and maintaining reliable electric service for our members—no matter what challenges come our way.



OCEC recently installed fire-retardant pole wrap on 150 poles along the 69 kV transmission line from the Cloudcroft Substation to the Tunnel. The wrap helps protect critical infrastructure from wildfire damage and supports continued reliable service to the mountain area around Cloudcroft.