



POWERGRAM

A monthly newsletter for OCEC Members

REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK: A YEAR-ROUND COMMITMENT

Wildfires are no longer confined to the western United States. Rising temperatures, prolonged drought and changing weather patterns have increased wildfire risk across much of the country—including here in New Mexico. What was once considered a regional concern has become a national issue, requiring awareness, preparation and action from all of us.

At Otero County Electric Cooperative (OCEC), protecting our members and the communities we serve remains our highest priority. As we recognize National Wildfire Awareness Month in May, it's important to understand that wildfire mitigation is not a seasonal effort—it's a year-round commitment that is built into how we maintain and operate our electric system.

One of the most effective ways we reduce wildfire risk is through our ongoing vegetation management program. Maintaining safe clearances around power lines is critical to both reliability and fire prevention. OCEC crews work year-round to trim and remove vegetation along rights-of-way, helping reduce the chance of contact between trees and energized lines—especially during dry, windy conditions. While this work can sometimes seem extensive, it plays a vital role in minimizing wildfire risk and preventing outages before they occur.

In addition to traditional methods, over the past year, we've incorporated the use of drones for line patrol and inspection, allowing crews to safely and efficiently assess infrastructure in hard-to-reach or rugged terrain. This proactive approach helps us identify potential issues—such as damaged equipment or encroaching vegetation—before they become larger problems, improving both system reliability and wildfire prevention.

Wildfire mitigation also extends beyond operations and into public policy. Managing electric infrastructure on or near public lands can present unique challenges. OCEC supports practical, commonsense solutions that improve access for maintenance and reduce hazardous fuel buildup, ensuring utilities can continue to safely serve their communities.

While OCEC is committed to doing our part, wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility. There are several simple but important steps members can take to help reduce risk:

- Maintain defensible space around your home by clearing dry vegetation and debris
- Use lawn equipment and chainsaws carefully, particularly during hot, dry weather
- Stay informed about local burn bans and fire restrictions

Wildfires are becoming more frequent and more complex, but through proactive system maintenance, continued investment in technology, and strong community partnerships, we can reduce risk and build resilience.

At OCEC, we take this responsibility seriously. Our members depend on us not only for reliable electricity, but for leadership in helping protect the communities we all call home.



Proactive vegetation management programs lower the risk of wildfires.

Getting Ahead of **Wildfires**



MAY CALENDAR PHOTO submitted by DeMarco Salazar

**MAY
2026**

**CLOUDCROFT
575-682-2521**

**ALTO
575-336-4550**

**CARRIZOZO
575-648-2352**

**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
1-855-940-3957**

WWW.OCEC-INC.COM

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.

- Wills Canyon
- Sacramento
- 16 Springs Road
- Cloudcroft
- James Canyon
- High Rolls

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.

2026 YOUTH TOUR DELEGATES CHOSEN

Four local students have been chosen to attend the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour in June.

These young leaders will participate in a life-changing week in the nation's capital as they meet with U.S. representatives and senators, tour some of the finest museums in the world, visit historic monuments and memorials, and develop lifelong friendships and connections with delegates from across the country.

Interested students submitted an application along with two written essays. In-person interviews were held, and the top applicants were chosen to participate in this all-expenses-paid trip this summer.

Then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson addressed a crowd at the 1957 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting, proposing that rural teens should have the opportunity to experience Washington, D.C., and see their government in action. America's electric cooperatives were the perfect organizations to facilitate this idea.

That summer, a few Texas cooperatives sent teens from their service areas. The next year, Iowa and Illinois followed suit and brought their own busload of rural youth to Washington, D.C.

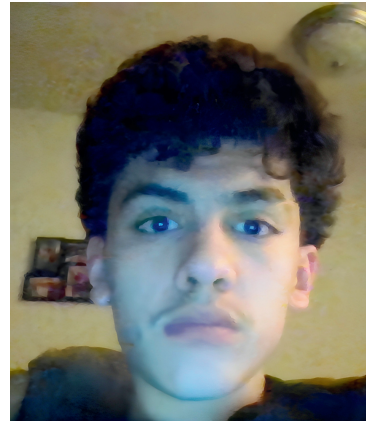
In 1964, NRECA—the national service organization representing America's electric cooperatives—began coordinating the activities. Youth Tour has grown bigger and stronger in the 60-plus years since the first students ascended on the capital.

Otero County Electric sponsored its first group of students in 2017. Help us congratulate the 2026 OCEC Youth Tour delegates and wish these young leaders well on their summer trip!

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

As temperatures start to rise, many homeowners focus on staying cool. Don't forget about the small gaps around windows and doors. While air sealing is often associated with keeping cold air out during winter, it's just as important during summer. Tiny cracks and worn weatherstripping allow cool, conditioned air to escape and hot, humid air to seep indoors. This forces your air conditioner to work harder than necessary and increases energy costs. Take a few minutes to check for drafts, replace weatherstripping and seal leaks. A tighter home keeps you more comfortable and helps manage energy use.

Source: energy.gov



Kamden Diaz
Hondo High School



Brisa Johnson
Cloudcroft High School



Adalize Kanseah
Mescalero High School



Jackson Wolfe
Alamogordo High School



OCEC ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1
CLOUDCROFT HS GYM