



# POWER-GRAM

A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

**January  
2021**



Left: Photo by Jody Mancillas

**Cloudcroft**

**575-682-2521**

**Alto**

**575-336-4550**

**Carrizozo**

**575-648-2352**

[www.ocec-inc.com](http://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**

FOLLOW US ON  
**facebook**

## General Manager Update—2020, What a year!

2020 has been a year many people would like to forget. Many have lost loved ones, dealt with illness, experienced financial hardship, lost a job, or perhaps lost their business. We have all been affected by the pandemic in one way or another. Although this year has been difficult, silver linings can be found if we look for them.

Very early in the pandemic, utilities in New Mexico were required to stop disconnecting residential customers for non-payment. Recognizing cutting off power to a struggling business might be the proverbial final nail in the coffin, OCEC's Board of Trustees extended this help to small businesses in the General Service rate class. Fortunately, we have seen very few businesses in our area close permanently. Many have adapted to stay open and some are even thriving.

As a member-owner of OCEC, you can take comfort in knowing that even though OCEC experienced some challenges this year, your cooperative has adapted to many of the unknowns and has come out of 2020 in relatively good shape. This can be attributed in large part to two things, the cooperative business model itself and the quality of employees working to serve the OCEC membership.

This has never been more apparent to me than in 2020. With very little impact to our membership, we have had to make several operational changes to comply with public health orders and to keep employees and members safe. Many employees are working from home. Employee meetings, safety trainings, and board meetings have all been held virtually. Line crews have been required to limit contact with each other and work in small groups. Despite all the changes, our employees have demonstrated professionalism, flexibility, and competency, continuing to seamlessly provide reliable electric service to OCEC members.

In addition to being great at their job, OCEC employees are great people. Whether donating sick leave, holding a fund raiser, or donating money to a fellow co-worker in need, like any good family, there are numerous examples in 2020 of our employees and trustees taking care of each other. This extends to our communities as well. Employees and trustees recently raised \$2,700 in personal contributions to provide Christmas gifts to children in our area. Member contributions to OCEC's Operation Round-Up were used as matching funds, bringing the total up to \$5,400.

As a locally governed, member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, you would have a hard time finding an organization more in touch with the people and communities of Otero, Lincoln, and Chavez County. As I often say, our members' interests are at the heart of every decision we make. This happens almost naturally, since our employees and trustees are the friends, family, and neighbors of the people we serve. Whether it be our line crew restoring power during an outage, or an office employee helping a member on the phone, our employees know and understand they are positively affecting the lives of the people in our communities. As the General Manager of OCEC, I get to see the impact they make every day... and I must say, it is tremendous, and they do a GREAT job.

So this year, when so many of our first responders and essential workers have rightfully received recognition for the service they provide, let us not forget to include our utility workers, especially all the employees at OCEC. We have all been blessed and our lives are better because of the work they do!

*Mario A. Romero*



## Scholarship Opportunity Available

OCEC's Education Foundation started awarding scholarships to area students in 1989. Since its inception more than \$1.1 million dollars have been awarded to deserving students attending a New Mexico university, college or technical school.

The scholarship is \$1,000 per semester and can be renewed for up to seven additional (7) semesters with verification that the required GPA is maintained and student has enrolled for upcoming semester. To be eligible, the student must be an active member receiving electric service from Otero County Electric Cooperative. Applications are available at any OCEC office, on our website at [www.ocec-inc.com](http://www.ocec-inc.com), or from your school guidance counselor.

**Don't wait. The deadline to apply is March 15.**

## January Employment Anniversary

Jessica Aguilar—Billing Representative—10 years  
Bill Denney—Member Services Advisor—19 years  
Kevin Harrington—Apprentice Lineman—2 years  
Donny Shafer—Warehouse Coordinator—17 years

## 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

- Sac River area
- Timberon
- Hwy. 220
- Hwy. 380

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

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

## Private Property Access

The system that provides electric service to you and your neighbors is a network of poles, wires and underground cables that crisscross over public and private property. Access to OCEC equipment on private property is a critical part of delivering reliable electricity to all members. Occasionally, linemen and servicemen may be on members' property—without notice—to inspect equipment, verify meter readings, maintain rights-of-way, troubleshoot and restore outages, or evaluate safety of infrastructure for ongoing maintenance needs.

If entry to your property is through a locked gate, we respectfully ask that you allow us to install an OCEC lock or share your gate combination with us so crews can get onto your property in a timely manner when required to do so. Keys for OCEC locks are distributed to only those crew members who may have cause to be on your land, and combinations are kept confidential and never shared with outside sources. We only access your property when necessary and respect your privacy. Our personnel are professional, courteous and will be in a vehicle that is clearly marked with the OCEC logo.

Contact your local OCEC office with questions, to request a lock for your location or give us an updated combination for your entrance. We appreciate your understanding when we must enter your property.



## 3 Ways to Improve Fireplace Efficiency

- Close the flue damper when a fire isn't burning.
- Ensure seals around the fireplace damper are tight.
- Insulate your chimney with liners for maximum efficiency.