



POWER-GRAM

February
2021

Cludcroft
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

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A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Left: Photo by Carson Denney

My Electric Bill is High—What Could Be the Cause for the Increase

This time of year, it's fairly normal for member service representatives to answer a lot of phone calls from members questioning the amount of their electric bill. Weather patterns, amount of daylight hours, guests in your home, or new medical equipment can all lead to higher electric bills. Couple that with a pandemic where people are staying home more, and suddenly, opening your electric bill can come as a shock.

If this happens to you, there are some things you can look at to determine if the bill is correct. The meter number and previous/present readings are shown on your electric bill. Verify that the meter number on your bill matches the physical meter at your home. Then, take a look at the readings to ensure they are correct. Digital meters may alternate between several different numbers—the kWh reading indicates the number used to calculate how much electricity is used. Verify that the current kWh reading is higher than the present reading on your bill. If it is not, there could have been a misread and your bill may be miscalculated. Call our office to let us know you think this has occurred and we will have a member of our billing department look into it and correct your account.

If the meter number and readings seem correct, next you may want to do a year-to-year comparison of usage. Your bill includes a bar graph showing your usage for the past thirteen months exactly for this purpose. Compare your current bill to the same month in the previous year. Usage for the same month may fluctuate some, but usage that doubles or triples from one year to the next, is a definite cause for investigation into what produced the change.

If the meter number, readings and comparison don't indicate any problems, it is time to take a deeper dive into what could be causing the

increase in electric consumption. Here are a few common things that increase usage:

- Medical equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator, can increase electric usage. A 400 watt unit used 24 hours per day can increase your bill by as much as \$40 per month.
- Could you have a water leak? While this may seem like an odd question when analyzing your electric bill, it's not. If you have a well, a faucet that is lightly dripping or a toilet that is running more than it should can increase usage by causing your pump to work more than it should.
- Are you using heat tapes or a space heater to prevent water pipes from freezing in the cold temperatures? While manufacturers may claim these units to be energy efficient, they are a number one cause of high bills for OCEC members this time of year. A 1,500 watt heater used constantly in a cold space, such as a well house, can add over 1,000 kWh which can equate to \$150 or more to your electric bill each month.

If you still have concerns after looking over the above items, please call our office and speak with a member service representative who will be glad to talk with you, go over usage reports, and suggest energy efficiency upgrades that may help you lower your monthly electric bill. We are happy to help you with your energy questions.



... HAPPY ...
**PRESIDENT'S
DAY**

**OCEC Offices Closed
Monday, February 15**



Scholarships Available to Area Students

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, or from your school guidance counselor.

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



January Employment Anniversary

MaryJo Cook—Accounting Clerk—5 years
Leah Freeman—Accountant I—7 years
Courtney Grubbs—Member Service Rep.—1 year
Daimhin Kelley—Crew Chief—14 years
Damon Marez—IT Manager—17 years
Leslie Samora—Member Service Rep. Supv.—18 years
Baylee Sanderson—Staking Technician—2 years

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER



Janscen Davis was chosen as the Employee of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2020. He works out of the Cloudcroft office as an equipment operator, and has been with OCEC since 2015.

Janscen was chosen as the employee of the quarter for his commitment to safety. He not only works to keep he and his fellow co-workers safe, but keeps the safety of our members in mind, too. He went out of his way recently to help educate some young members about the dangers of electricity.

Congratulations, Janscen!

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source: energy.gov

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

- Hondo Valley
- Mescalero
- James Canyon
- Timberon
- Weed
- Pinon

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.

BEWARE In this day and time, personal safety has to be a top priority for everyone. There have been reports of incidents involving people posing as utility workers, by phone and in person. OCEC urges its members to be wary of persons identifying themselves as co-op employees.

Our employees, will be in vehicles with our logo affixed to the door and wearing clothing clearly marked with our logo. In addition, employees working for companies contracted by OCEC, should have placards on their vehicles showing they are a contractor with OCEC. At no time should one of our employees need to come into your home to make repairs. If you have concerns and want to verify if someone is an employee of OCEC, call 1-800-548-4660.

There have been reports of individuals working in our area who have indicated they are working for OCEC to install solar panels at members' homes. While these people may be working for a legitimate company that installs solar panels, they are not contracted with or affiliated with Otero County Electric. OCEC urges members to use extra caution when contacted by these companies and to protect your personal information. Don't provide copies of your electric bill or account number without verifying that the individual asking has a valid need for the information.