

## State of the Co-op Address – 3/30/2020

Last week I told you about some of the things we are doing at Rio Grande to ensure that we are able to continue providing for your electric power needs during the pandemic. Nothing on that front has changed. Some of us continue to work remotely, and some are at the offices. The supplies and equipment are still available, and, thankfully, none of the Co-op's employees have contracted the virus.

What has changed in the past week, is that we are seeing more and more COVID-19 cases in and around the communities we serve, and the new recommendation is that "social distancing" and "stay-at-home" orders stay in place through at least April 30. This means our lobbies will remain closed to the public longer than we had hoped. We are continuing to do our part to stop the spread of this deadly virus.

Staying at home is the safest thing you can do for your family right now. It also means you need to be extra vigilant about how much electric energy you use. With the temperature in Rio Grande's service territory going up, up, up, and everyone at home, you may be tempted to turn your air conditioning system to a cooler setting. Every degree cooler has a consequence when it comes time to pay the bill. The price of wholesale power climbed between 22% and 39% in the ERCOT region the week of March 23. (ERCOT manages the grid for most of the state of Texas.) Rio Grande is semi-insulated from market spikes because we purchase a certain amount of power at a contracted price. Only when members use more than what RGEC has contracted for during a certain time, do we have to purchase on the open market. I'm telling you this, so that you can make any necessary adjustments to your energy usage patterns now.

There are things you can do to mitigate the effect on your electric bill of having the family home during this time. They are relatively simple things, but vastly important. It's a bit like orders to stay at home – a little discipline now can make all the difference in the outcome.

- **Program your thermostat to maximize energy savings.** Setting your thermostat one degree higher when cooling, (or one degree lower when heating), can reduce energy use by up to 5 %.
- **Do full loads of laundry.** Using warm water instead of hot can cut a load's energy use in half. Experts say unless there is an ill person in your household, warm should be sufficient. The heat of the dryer may also help kill germs/viruses.
- **Air dry dishes.** This step can cut your dishwasher's energy use by up to 50 percent. Only if there is an ill person in your home, do you need to use the "sanitize" cycle.
- **Substitute LEDs for conventional light bulbs.** Lighting can amount to up to 12% of monthly energy use. LED bulbs can cut lighting costs by 75%.
- **Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use.** Many small appliances and electronics use energy even when not in use. When powered on, game consoles, televisions and similar electronics are responsible for up to 12% of energy use.

We realize this is a stressful time, especially when paychecks may reflect a reduction of hours because of pandemic-related business layoffs. If you need to make payment arrangements for an eligible residential account, please contact your local customer service representative before the due date on the bill, and we will work out a deferred payment agreement with you.

[www.riogrande.coop/contact](http://www.riogrande.coop/contact)

We are still here to serve you, albeit a bit differently than before. You can contact us in a variety of electronic ways, whether it's SmartHub, Secure Pay Phone System, e-mail to customer service representatives, social media, or by phone.

Until next week, please heed the orders to stay "socially distanced", wash your hands, and remember that we are all in this together. It's only by working together for the common good – like cooperatives – that we will survive.

God bless you and keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy,

Roger Andrade, CEO