

## CEO'S STATE OF THE CO-OP ADDRESS 4/6/2020:

Here we are in week #3 of closed lobbies at RGEC to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Those in-the-know project the next 2-3 weeks will be critical in flattening the curve, or stemming the spread, in the areas we serve. The whole thing seems a bit surreal at times.

On my mental list of "things to worry about", I have to admit that "pandemic" didn't even make the list. As we entered the year 2020, I envisioned CEO articles to you about all we are doing to keep the price of power affordable, and how we are utilizing technology to overcome some of the challenges posed by distance and terrain in Rio Grande's service territory. I will still write those articles someday, because I truly believe in our mission, and I want to share the good news with you. Right now, though, we are focused on continuing to provide an essential service critical to public health and safety, while promoting the ability of such work to continue during periods when community restriction, access management, social distancing, or closure order/directives are in place throughout RGEC's service areas.

I don't know about you, but other than while watching a few apocalyptic movies, I really never gave any thought to it. Now, the stuff of Sci-Fi movies is our daily reality, and that reality shifts daily. Every day, it seems, brings new orders from cities and counties within our service territory, or new requirements from the state or nation, in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. The changes are posted daily on our website's COVID-19 page, [www.riogrande.coop/COVID](http://www.riogrande.coop/COVID), and are usually reflected by about 1:00 p.m. (Central). We are keeping up with this because we want to make sure we are in compliance in each of the 18 Texas and 2 New Mexico counties the Cooperative serves. I am thankful to report that none of the Co-op's employees are included among the count of those who have contracted the virus, and we are still on the job working for you, either remotely, in the offices, or in the field. I can't say that it's exactly "business as usual", but we are being resourceful in how we "keep on keeping on" to ensure you have the power you need. For example, the director election process is still being carried out on schedule, with Nominating Committees having met via conference calls. Where there is a will, there is a way!

Here at RGEC, we are continually making adjustments, as issues arise that have never even been thought of before. We quickly enacted a way for residential consumers to defer billing, for those affected by the layoffs and slowdowns caused by the pandemic. We have been able to take care of our employees, so that they can take care of you. These procedures, too, continually change, as different situations arise. We are having to "think on our feet", and be fluid in how we address some situations, so please be patient, as we work through things to the best of our ability to ensure the health of the Cooperative, its members, and employees.

As we enter this week of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, it is important to focus on the essentials. It's not about the new dress or suit, it's not the sunrise service or potluck lunch with the whole congregation. It is not about kids hunting Easter eggs or smashing cascarones and piñatas. As with other aspects of our daily lives during these times, we have to let go of the superficial and remember what is truly important.

Things will eventually return to some semblance of normalcy, and we have to plan ahead for that, as well. Rio Grande will observe the 75th anniversary of its founding in a couple of months. RGEC was founded during the Great Depression by tough, hardworking people, who had a true pioneer vision. Those of us who didn't live through those hard times are beginning to gain a new appreciation for those who came before us. As stewards of the Cooperative for the generations to come, we have to keep our perspective. I have seen some comments on social media suggesting that we should do such things as waive everyone's bills, or lower the rates during the pandemic, but those things are not practical and are not in the best interest of the Co-op. Why is it that people never expect their grocery store, or phone carrier, TV, or internet provider to lower prices? The average RGEC residential consumer still pays a little over \$5.00 per day for electricity. For the convenience, comfort, and security it provides, electric energy remains one of the best values. You control the amount of

your monthly bill by how much electricity you use. I encourage you to take advantage of the energy saving messages on the RGEC social media and website pages. It is entirely up to you which of these you implement, keeping in mind that every energy-saving step you take results in a lower bill at the end of the month. With everyone home more, this may be a challenge, and we remain cognizant of that, so if the time comes when you do need to defer a bill due to pandemic layoffs or slowdowns, remember to contact your area office prior to the due date of the bill, and we will work with you. You can reach the Customer Service Representatives at [www.riogrande.coop/contact](http://www.riogrande.coop/contact). We are doing what we can to ensure that everyone remains healthy, comfortable, and as stress-free as possible, given the current state of affairs.

Until next week, please stay home, stay well, and remember that with everyone's cooperation, we will get through this and come out the other side stronger and more resilient than ever before.

God bless and Happy Easter,  
Roger Andrade, CEO