

WEEK #5 CEO'S STATE OF THE CO-OP ADDRESS.

Here we are in Week #5 of social distancing and closed lobbies at RGEC. There is some encouraging news on the horizon. Governor Abbott announced that businesses and State parks will be reopening gradually, and the economy should start the long road back to some semblance of "normal" – whatever that is. Stimulus checks are going out, and that is taking a big load off many people's minds. However, if the pandemic has you in a financial jam and you need to defer your residential Co-op bill, just contact the Customer Service Representative (CSR) at your local office before the due date of the bill. A Deferred Payment Agreement could help take some of the pressure off. You can find CSR contact information at www.riogrande.coop/contact.

If what the authorities are saying is true, we are nearing the apex of the COVID-19 outbreak, and should start seeing a downward trend in the numbers of new cases. Social distancing seems to be working, at least in places where it is being taken seriously. To date, not a single case has been reported in Kinney County, where RGEC's Headquarters/Brackettville Area Office is located. Other RGEC office locations with no reported cases in the county include Alpine, Brewster County, and Dell City, in Hudspeth County. Dimmit County, where the Carrizo Springs office is located, has had only one confirmed case, and Pecos County, where the Fort Stockton office is, has had 5 cases. Unfortunately, El Paso County, where the office serving Ft. Bliss is located, has been hard hit, having 505 reported cases. The remainder of RGEC's service territory, is a mix of infected and uninfected counties. A map of affected areas looks like a patchwork quilt, with different orders and levels of infection in each. We constantly monitor county, city, and state orders, to assure RGEC workers are in compliance, as they travel throughout the Co-op's 35,000 square mile service territory. You can see the daily numbers on our website, www.riogrande.coop/COVID.

Through it all, every one of Rio Grande's 150+ employees remain virus-free, and still on the job working to serve you. We will continue social distancing, and lobbies will most likely remain closed at least through the end of May, in order to assure their safety, and yours. Unless something changes in the meantime, that is our target timeline. We are truly doing everything humanly possible to ensure the Cooperative and its employees are able to continue to provide the electric service you need.

So many things have changed in such a short period of time, and we, like everyone else, have had to adapt quickly. One such thing is that schools will not be holding Project Graduation parties this year. This is one of the worthwhile efforts to which RGEC historically contributes. In 2019 alone, RGEC supported 15 Project Graduation parties. For those not familiar, Project Graduation is a drug-free and alcohol-free after graduation party, which is a locked-in, supervised party. Social distancing means this year's graduates will not be celebrating as in past years. We wish each and every candidate for graduation the best on this important milestone in their lives.

Speaking of graduates, we are pleased to tell you that RGEC awarded \$1,500 scholarships to each of the eligible 21 high school seniors who applied. Selection of award from among applicants for the Continuing Education category will be announced soon. There were 12 eligible applicants in this group, who are all previous RGEC scholarship recipients, as well as a few who did not maintain the necessary minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0. It is gratifying to see how well some of our previous scholarship award winners are doing in college, and knowing that RGEC has invested in their educations is rewarding. Scholarships are awarded through a process by which the Co-op receives back a portion of unclaimed capital credits from the state.

Another quickly modified student activity was the National Electrical Safety Poster Contest for students in 1st-6th grades. Due to the cancellation of classroom activities, we extended the deadline to May 15, and altered the criteria, so students could mail their posters directly to RGEC. The contest is an annual event to make

students aware of the potential dangers of electricity, if it is not used wisely. The two winning posters each year are incorporated into the design of the book covers the Co-op provides throughout our service territory each year, over 25,000 in total, to spread the electrical safety message. In addition, each of the two winners receives a \$50 gift card. There is still time for students to submit an entry. For more information on the poster contest, go to www.riogrande.coop/contest/contest.asp.

Though there have been many adjustments, there are more things at RGEC that haven't changed. It is business as usual in many respects. Line crews still deal with outages, warehouse coordinators still ensure supplies and materials are ordered, received, and inventoried. Electrical technicians still make sure sensitive electronics on equipment and at substations are functioning properly. Accounting and Finance activities continue to assure that incoming bills are paid, that invoices go out, that payroll is processed, and myriad other functions, in order to maintain the financial integrity of the Co-op. Information Technology has been stepping it up, in order to accommodate the many employees working remotely, and to maintain high standards of cybersecurity. Departmental Specialists continue to provide support services for multiple departments, amid an ever-changing business landscape, and, not to be taken lightly during the pandemic, custodial services, which are more important now than ever. Human Resources personnel continue to juggle employees rotating in and out of remote work scenarios, as well as continuing their routine responsibilities such as employee education and training, hiring, and employee benefits. Customer Service Representatives and Dispatchers continue to be your primary points of contact, whether you have a question during the day, or are reporting an outage late at night. There are many, many others, each as important to the Cooperative's operation as those listed here, without whom, we could not operate.

Wednesday, April 22, marks Administrative Professionals/ Employee Appreciation Day at RGEC. As with Lineman Appreciation Day, we won't be gathering to mark this observance this year. While the job titles and responsibilities of the Cooperative's employees are as varied and diverse as the people who hold them, we couldn't possibly ask for a better group of people, or more skilled employees. Though you may never have the opportunity to meet many of them, they are as devoted to serving your needs behind the scenes as the line crews on the front lines.

Wash your hands, avoid crowds, and be mindful of your community's safety orders. We look forward to seeing you in person soon. Until next week, we will keep doing what we do, so you can have the power to do what you need to do.

Sincerely,
Roger Andrade
CEO