April 2010

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Otero County Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Power-Gram

For Outages Please call: 1-800-548-4660
Visit us at www.ocec-inc.com
Cloudcroft, N.M. 575-682-2521 Alto, N.M. 575-336-4550 Carrizozo, N.M. 575-648-2352

Otero County Electric Cooperative and ESFI Celebrate National Electrical Safety Month

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and OCEC is teaming up with the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) to launch a public awareness campaign to educate key audiences about the steps that can be taken to prevent electrical fires, injuries, and fatalities in the home and the workplace.

The most recent statistical data from the National Fire Protection Association indicates an annual average of more than 53,000 electrical home structure fires, claiming more than 450 lives, injuring more than 1,400 people, and causing more than $1.4 billion in property damage. In the workplace, electrical hazards are the cause of another almost 4,000 non-fatal injuries.

"Eliminating electrical hazards begins with education and awareness," says ESFI President Brett Brenner. "National Electrical Safety Month is a time for all of us at home and at work to reexamine our surroundings and determine what steps we can take to prevent the hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries and billions of dollars in productivity and assets that occur each year because of electrical hazards."

This year's campaign will focus on one key electrical safety issue during each week in May:

Renovating the Right Way (May 2-8): Whether you are a first-time do-it-yourselfer or a "weekend warrior," practicing safe habits can reduce your risk when it comes to home electrical work. Use ESFI's *Electrical Safety Workbook* to conduct a basic electrical safety audit of your home.

Staying Safe at Work (May 9-15): Use ESFI's new *Office Safety Checklist* to perform a basic electrical safety inspection at work and keep your office safe from electrical hazards.

Educating Your Children (May 16-22): Do your children know what it takes to stay safe when it comes to electricity? Visit ESFI's *Kids Corner*, a new online resource that features teaching tools and educational resources to teach kids about electrical safety.

Remembering Electrical Safety in the Field (May 23-29): Use ESFI's *Never Assume* Safety Series to give you and your co-workers the right frame of mind when it comes to safety in the workplace. From job planning to arc flash awareness, this one-of-a-kind video program is a must for anyone working with or near electricity!

To help promote electrical safety, ESFI has developed a campaign toolkit that is organized to align with the campaign itself. In this kit, you will find tools you can use to facilitate an effective electrical safety awareness campaign for your community, organization, customers, and workplace associates. ESFI's complimentary 2010 NESM Campaign Toolkit can be downloaded on the foundation's website at www.electrical-safety.org.

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The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety in the home and the workplace. ESFI proudly sponsors National Electrical Safety Month each May, and engages in public education campaigns throughout the year to prevent electrical fires, injuries, and fatalities. For more information about ESFI and National Electrical Safety Month, visit www.electrical-safety.org.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF OCEC

Effective May 1, 2010, payments for your OCEC electric bill will no longer be accepted at Tularosa Basin Telephone Company locations. With OCEC now accepting payments by phone and E-Bill, alternate payment locations are no longer needed. OCEC will continue accepting payments at our Carrizozo office for TBTC services.

INFORMATION YOU CAN FIND AT OUR WEBSITE WWW.OCEC-INC.COM

- Make a payment with your credit card, debit card, or pay by e-check.
- Check your balance, payment history, consumption history and a detailed copy of your billing information.
- Online Energy Audit
- Kids Corner for educational purposes.
- Regulatory Information
- Existing Rates
- Products and Services offered by OCEC.
- Job Opportunities
- Net Metering Information
- Contacts at OCEC
- Energy Calculator

INFORMATION REQUESTED BY COOPERATIVE

When you as a member of Otero County Electric Cooperative, Inc. perform some type of improvements around your home or property and you add electrical load, please notify OCEC to notify us so we can be assured that the equipment we have at your location is sized properly. Failure to do so may result in damage to your equipment and also the cooperative's equipment. So to avoid unnecessary outages or damages to equipment, please contact OCEC when you add a load at your location

Keeping Power Flowing

We often take electricity for granted. It makes our homes comfortable day-in and day-out, and it's at the ready with little more than the flip of a switch.

But what goes on behind the scenes once that switch is thrown is far more complex. The power grid, which can be described as the largest, most complex machine ever built, involves an intricate network of power lines crisscrossing neighborhoods and open country, over mountains and through cities, which has evolved over the last century to supply consumers with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

The tricky thing about electricity is that it must be used, or moved to where it can be used, the second it's produced; it generally can't be stored like water or gas. What's more, electricity moves at the speed of light along the path of least resistance. This basic principle calls for a carefully monitored, intricate system to move it 24 hours a day.

Literally millions of miles of power lines span the United States in a complex series of "highways." These lines can be broken into two main categories: **transmission**, the high-voltage "interstates" supported by steel towers and other similar structures that move electricity over vast distances; and **distribution**, the "local roads" that run through small towns and neighborhoods and into homes and businesses. Electric cooperatives own and maintain roughly 65,000 miles, or 6 percent, of the nation's transmission lines and 2.5 million miles, or 42 percent, of its distribution lines, according to the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. This co-op-maintained system could cover the distance to the moon and back five times over.

Otero County Electric Cooperative alone has its own sizeable distribution system to maintain: our lineworkers stay busy keeping over 2,600 miles of line up and running, 24/7.

When there's a problem somewhere on our system, a power outage typically results. Pinpointing the cause of an outage among those thousands of miles of line may seem like trying to find a needle in a haystack, but OCEC line crews try largely to boil it down to a science.

To understand how co-op staff restores power during an outage, think of electricity distribution like a river in reverse. It originates at a single ocean of power—a generation plant—and diverges from there into a series of transmission lines, substations, and smaller feeder lines until it reaches homes and businesses at a trickle of its original strength. So when we start assessing storm damage, we work to fix the biggest problems first (those starting near the "ocean"), prioritizing repairs according to how they can get the most homes back in service the fastest.

It's a big job, but our line crews are up to the challenge. If there is an outage in your area, you can help crews pinpoint damage by calling us at 1-800-548-4660. Even if your neighbors have already called, every bit of information we have helps get the river flowing smoothly again.

New Voluntary Renewable Program Rate

Effective with the May billing, purchases of renewable resources will be adjusted from $0.40 per 100 kWh per month block to $0.09 per 100 kWh per month block. The reduction in rate reflects the price decline in the RECs market and the cost of Tri-State's current voluntary renewable portfolio.

The RECs, that are purchased for the Voluntary Renewable Program, are generated from wind, solar, geothermal, small hydroelectric or biomass resources.

If you have questions or would like to sign up for the Voluntary Renewable Program, please contact the nearest OCEC office.