



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Daniel G. Laws

Sometimes, surviving is the best we can do when conditions and situations are so far outside the norm, that all the planning in the world could not have anticipated the actual experience. I realize that to only be able to say, “We survived”, sounds somewhat defeated, but it is a fair way to describe 2004, if you are a Rio Grande Electric Cooperative employee.

In 2004, we were repeatedly hammered by severe thunderstorm after severe thunderstorm. We sometimes were not able to recover from one, before another would hit. Linemen repeatedly worked around-the-clock to keep electric energy flowing to your home. Almost every weekend, for most linemen, was spent searching for line breaks and downed power poles. Some of them worked so many hours, the dog didn't even recognize them when they got home. Total overtime hours were in excess of 30,000.

In January, we lost a couple of 69,000 volt transmission line poles and our circuit switcher in South Brewster County. Parts of South Brewster County spent so much time under water throughout the spring, you would have thought the polar ice cap had melted. By the time May rolled around, we suffered a catastrophic failure in the Brackettville substation, which destroyed the power transformer.

Then, in August, a severe storm hit Dell City, taking out 14 distribution poles and one 115,000 volt transmission line structure. The rain flooded our local service center and the high winds destroyed our communications tower. In late summer and early fall, portions of Pecos and Terrell Counties spent some amount of time under water, and all the draws and ordinarily dry creek beds were out of their banks.

It was not uncommon to have vehicles stuck, send another vehicle to pull it out, and get the rescue vehicle stuck! During flooding near Altuda, we brought in a bulldozer to pull one of our digger trucks out of the mud. Not only did we get the dozer stuck, but we almost buried it. A good part of that night was spent pulling vehicles out of the mud.

Despite it all, we managed to accomplish a great deal last year. The pages that follow are filled with information about those accomplishments. There are many measures of success, but for us, the best measure is simply this; when you reached to turn the lights on day in and day out last year, did they come on most of the time? If they did, then we did a pretty good job, in spite of all the obstacles.

The greatest accomplishment, however, as we close the books on 2004, is that we *survived*. All of Rio Grande's employees, and especially the linemen, met the challenges of last year with unwavering commitment and dedication, and they *survived* when there was every reason to fail. Their resourcefulness is the essence of what makes Rio Grande your “Home Team Advantage”.

