



"Owned By Those We Serve"

# Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc.

# UP DATE



August, 2002



## A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Daniel G. Laws

***"If it wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any at all."***

You have heard the expression, "If it wasn't for bad luck I wouldn't have any at all". Well, there are some members around our service territory and some employees that feel the expression was made with them in mind. East of the Pecos River, a deluge of rain and severe thunderstorms have plagued our system. West of the Pecos, prolonged dry conditions followed by what was initially light moisture, led to extraordinary outages. Don't get me wrong—I am glad for the much-needed rain, but it did cause some problems.

The folks served out of our Pat Lee substation have been hit the hardest. Since June 1<sup>st</sup>, we have not gone seven days in a row without a major component failure. Today is July 16<sup>th</sup>; if we make it through today without having a problem at the Pat Lee substation, we will have finally broken that six-week long record. If our Director of Operations, Clinton Brown and our Fort Stockton Area Operations Manager, Darrell Skeen knew these words were being written, they would be in a panic fearing that I had jinxed them.

Now I know what some of you are thinking, "Dan, if you guys would do a little maintenance you wouldn't have these problems." I understand those feelings, and more importantly, I understand why you might jump to such a conclusion — but the truth of the matter is, we do maintain the system. In fact, a newly rebuilt voltage regulator put in service on July 3, 2002, as routine maintenance, *caused* the last failure at the Pat Lee substation. The regulator failed six days after installation. The regulator had been rebuilt by the cooperative statewide association (TEC) transformer repair facility in Georgetown, while we were still members of TEC, but was not put in service

until July 3. As you know, we do not use TEC repair facilities anymore.

While being without power is a tremendous nuisance, I hope you will remember that you are served by an enormous system that traverses some of the most rugged terrain in the country. As such, the exposure to problems is significant and there is no doubt that when a storm system hits Texas anywhere, it will eventually affect Rio Grande somewhere, because of our vast service territory. It is our goal and sincere desire that you never be without power; however, as a practical matter that is unlikely. Rest assured that every effort is made to quickly restore power. I have said it before, but it bears repeating; when the power goes out, our crews go out and they don't return until the power is restored —period. Please understand this is not a standard I have set for them to follow; it is a standard they set for themselves.

In closing, let me mention that one of our employees recently suffered an electrical contact that resulted in a severe burn. Trini Manzano came in contact with 14,400 volts on June 19. Voltage entered the back of his left hand and exited his body at his left foot. The accident was the result of his failure to follow well-established safety rules and procedures. I mention that fact not to hold him up to ridicule, but to simply say that it was an avoidable accident. I am not sure of everything God was doing on June 19, but I am sure of at least one thing He was doing—He protected one of our valued linemen and I am thankful that He did. I know Trini would appreciate your prayers, as he makes a full recovery. Trini and all of our linemen give substance to the expression,

**"Your Home Team Advantage".**