

PANDEMIC IMPACTS EVERYONE

BY REG RUDOLPH GENERAL MANAGER

Every Coloradan — even every American — has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I'm writing this article in early April, the uncertainty of the future remains high. As humans we're social creatures of habit and being told to stay home and keep a social distance doesn't seem natural.

San Isabel Electric has emergency plans to react to extreme weather events and natural disasters. But when we think of the emergency situations we will be responding to, we think of snow and ice storms, not pandemics. Our pandemic response required even more action than our plans accounted for.

San Isabel Electric's first goal is always safety. Keeping our employees and the public safe during an emergency is critical. We prepare for emergency situations, so when they happen we can execute with calmness and confidence. This pandemic was different because we weren't trying to restore power but instead preparing to keep everyone safe while they are required to stay home, isolated from the pandemic.

Electricity is listed as an essential critical infrastructure. With members being asked to stay at home, it would be difficult to live a normal life without the internet, television or use of other appliances and technology that require electricity. San Isabel Electric needed to keep the power on while trying to keep our employees safe at the same time.

Within five days, our employees who work in the offices were outfitted with technology to perform their jobs from home. This was no small feat, considering we didn't have any employees who work remotely. The board of directors has always been willing to invest in technology to better serve the members, and our technology staff has made sure those investments were flexible and mobile.

Our lobbies were closed and office employees began working from home. Hopefully those members who called for assistance didn't realize they were calling an employee who could have been sitting at his or her kitchen table.

Our engineering and operations employees began working solo, except in emergency situations, to restore power or repair hazards. At San Isabel Electric, we know how important electricity is to our members to maintain a normal life and, during this pandemic, we know maintaining a reliable source of electricity to your home would help create a sense of calm.

We don't know when this will end but know it's going to have a negative impact on southern Colorado's economy. As a result, the board of directors told staff to accelerate the capital credits retirement to our members. If you were an active member last

year, you should receive a check from San Isabel Electric.

These checks will probably not be large, but it's an example of the benefit of cooperative membership. This is your ownership stake in the cooperative and we're attempting to return it as soon as possible.

San Isabel Electric knows the economy is suffering and will need a kick start. Last year, the board of directors set a goal of being more proactive with economic development, and we now have a person dedicated full time to help our members and businesses be more successful. We will look for every opportunity we can find and let the membership know immediately.

These are anxious times in southern Colorado. Everyone is feeling the impact socially and economically. San Isabel Electric is working hard to do our part. Because you are friends and neighbors, we, too, are impacted by the same crisis. Stay well and healthy, as we all pray for better days ahead.



REG RUDOLPH

Electrical Safety Checklist

Spending more time at home? Take a few minutes to identify and correct any potential electrical hazards to ensure the safety of your home.

SWITCHES AND OUTLETS

- **Are any switches or outlets warm to the touch?** YES NO
Warm switches or outlets indicate an unsafe wiring condition.
- **Are any outlets or switches discolored?** YES NO
Discoloration indicates dangerous heat buildup at these connections.
- **Do plugs fit snugly into outlets?** YES NO
Loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

CORDS

- **Are any cords cracked, frayed or damaged?** YES NO
Damaged cords can expose wires, causing shock or fire hazard.
- **Are any cords pinched by furniture or windows, or attached to anything with staples or nails?** YES NO
Pinching and/or stapling cords can damage the insulation, causing shock or fire hazard.
- **Do you use extension cords on a permanent basis?** YES NO
Extension cords should only be used temporarily.

ELECTRIC PANEL

- **Do you have recurring tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses?** YES NO
If yes, this could indicate you're exceeding a safe level of electrical current.
- **Do you have arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs)?** YES NO
AFCIs provide greater fire protection. Check your circuit breakers for the AFCI label.

Please note this is not a comprehensive safety checklist. Visit ESFI.org for more information. Source: ESFI

6 WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY WHEN SPENDING MORE TIME INDOORS

Spending more time indoors and at home doesn't have to mean a higher electric bill. Here's a list of six ways to start using less energy when spending more time indoors.



SMARTHUB

Use SmartHub to manage your energy usage and take the guesswork out of your bill. SmartHub is San Isabel Electric's account management app. SmartHub's Budget Gauge tool allows you to set up a target monthly budget amount and, using your daily usage data, allows you to analyze where you are relative to that budget target to help keep you on track and on budget. A slider lets you vary the target monthly budget amount to see how your bill will be affected if you use more or less electricity.

The Energy Explorer tool allows you to compare energy use over time, down to the hour, and against weather data. Tracking your energy use like this lets you see if you're using more energy than usual and empowers you to make adjustments if necessary. If you don't already have a SmartHub account, download the app from your smartphone's app store or go to siea.com/smarthub from a computer. For detailed how-to SmartHub directions go to siea.com/smarthub.

UNPLUG

Unplug everything you're not using at the moment. Look for energy vampire gadgets that are sucking electricity even while you're not using them, such as printers, wall gadget chargers, televisions, extra monitors, extra computers, gaming systems and coffee pots. Look for things that have standby lights that indicate something is still sucking electricity even though you're not using it, and leave it unplugged until you need it.

MINIMIZE GADGETS

OK, so unplugging everything you're not using and plugging it back in when you're ready isn't practical for everyone. Try minimizing the number of gadgets you leave on. Do you and your family really need to have two televisions, a computer, three tablets, five smartphones and two gaming systems to get you through the day? Think about the gadgets and electronics you and your family absolutely need for the day, power down the ones you don't need and store them in a place out of sight if possible.

WORK OR PLAY OUTSIDE

Social distancing doesn't have to mean staying indoors. Getting outdoors can do great things for your health. Studies show spending time outdoors can boost your immune system, reduce stress and lower your blood pressure. If the weather is nice, work or play outside while maintaining proper social distancing from anyone who doesn't live in your home, of course. Try bringing your work-from-home setup outside, have the kids take a break from electronics for a few hours, get some fresh air, catch some sunbeams and keep productivity up.

OPEN THE CURTAINS

Whether you're working from home or keeping the kids entertained, hang out in the area of your house that receives the most natural light. Hanging out or working from places with poor natural light requires using more electricity to see what you're doing.

Throw back the curtains, pull up the shades and let as much natural light pour into your living space as possible. It can brighten the room, and natural light has also been shown to brighten the mood.

AVOID USING THE OVEN

Using the oven when it's already warm outside creates excess heat indoors, which may cause you to use extra electricity to expel that heat from your home using air-conditioning or fans. Try cooking on the stove, using the microwave oven or grilling outside instead. When the weather is nice, put your grill to use. During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors.

San Isabel Electric has always and will continue to work with the member-owners experiencing financial hardships.

Members who have outstanding bills who are laid off, furloughed or are having a difficult time paying their bills are encouraged to continue paying bills as they can, to avoid accumulating high balances due. Members who have balances will have the option to be put on a payment arrangement plan.

For a list of payment methods, visit siea.com/WaystoPay. If you are experiencing financial hardship and need to make alternative payment arrangements, please call 719-547-2160, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. or email us at contactus@siea.com.

Southern Colorado COVID-19 Economic Relief Resources

San Isabel Electric compiled a list of economic relief resources available to residential and commercial members the cooperative serves in southern Colorado. **This list will be updated periodically and is also available at siea.com/covid19.**

SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (SBA) LOAN GUIDE					
	Existing SBA 7(a) Loans and 7(a) Loan Debt Relief	Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)	SBA Bridge Loans	SBA Express Bridge Loans	Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
What?	Provides up to \$5 million for the full range of business needs. For Debt Relief, the SBA will pay the principal, interest, and fees of new and current 7(a) loans for a period of six months.	Provides eight weeks of payroll and certain overhead to keep workers employed. The loans will be forgiven if the funds are used to keep employees on the payroll and for certain other expenses.	Access to up to \$1 million in short-term financing support.	Small business access of up to \$25,000 with less paperwork and rapid turnaround. Funding will be repaid in full or in part by proceeds from the EIDL loan.	Disaster assistance in the form of low-interest loans to businesses, renters, and homeowners. All Colorado counties are eligible.
Maximum Loan Size	\$5 million	\$10 million	\$1 million (temporarily)	\$25,000	\$2 million. \$10,000 advances
SBA Turnaround Time	5-10 business days	"Same day"	36 hours	36 hours	2-3 weeks for disbursement
Forgiveness	Yes	Yes	No	May be repaid in full or in part by proceeds from an SBA EIDL loan	Does not need to be repaid if used for payroll

Energy Bill Support

Call 1-866-432-8435 or visit energyoutreach.org to take advantage of the Home Energy Relief Fund.

Colorado COVID Relief Fund

The Colorado COVID Relief Fund is offering eligible community-based nonprofit organizations, local government, school districts and small businesses across Colorado a general operating grant of up to \$25,000. Visit covrn.com/covid-relief-fund/ to learn more about grants, how to donate, or how you can volunteer.

Farmer and Rancher Support

Visit farmers.gov/coronavirus to explore the USDA's COVID-19 Resources. These include farm loans, crop insurance, Conservation Disaster Assistance, safety net programs, and more

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)

Visit CDLE's website to learn more about work-share programs, layoff assistance, paid sick leave, and unemployment claims.

COVID-19 Pandemic Assistance Hotline

Dial 211 or visit 211.org/services/covid19

Bilingual Resources

Bilingual Small Business COVID-19 Disaster Response Hotline: 303-860-5881

MOW ELECTRIC GET A \$100 REBATE

Outdoor Power Equipment Rebates are available on a first-come, first-serve basis, providing a rebate for 25%, or up to \$125, of the purchase cost of an electric mower or snowblower, and 25%, or up to \$75, of the purchase cost of an electric trimmer.

Full details at:
SIEA.COM/REBATES

