



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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CDEC Responds to COVID-19 Public Health Threat

GRANTS, N.M. – Continental Divide Electric Cooperative (CDEC) has taken several measures to help contain the potential spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and assist co-op members and broadband customers impacted.

Measures include:

- Cancellation of CDEC’s 2020 annual meeting of its membership, scheduled for Sat., April 25 at Grants High School, consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and the New Mexico Department of Health prohibition of gatherings larger than 5 people.
- Closing of our Grants and Gallup offices to the public, effective March 23, 2020. During business hours, members paying bills by cash, check or money order are asked to use our night-drop boxes. If you pay with cash, the entire amount will be applied to your account. If you would like a receipt, please note it on your bill stub, and we will provide one by email or mail. Credit or debit card payments can be made by telephone at 1-844-859-5979.
- Effective March 11, no electric service disconnects will occur through at least April 9, per New Mexico Public Regulation Commission order. Utilities do have the authority to disconnect service for safety reasons or upon customer request.
- No Red Bolt Broadband service disconnects for nonpayment will occur until further notice.
- Free WiFi access will be provided at key Grants and Milan public parks for those who need internet service.

“As a provider of essential services, CDEC is taking prudent measures to protect the health and safety of all, as we serve our membership during this evolving public health threat. Our primary objective is to provide uninterrupted service and keep our employees and members safe,” CDEC Chief Executive Officer Robert E. Castillo said.

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At its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on March 19, CDEC's governing board rendered the decision to cancel this year's CDEC annual meeting in compliance with the New Mexico Department of Health's emergency order prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people. (*As of March 23, that number had been reduced to 5 people.*)

"Recent orders and recommendations from state government and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are discouraging large gatherings for the next several weeks. As a result, many co-ops across the country have canceled annual meetings typically held in the spring," CDEC Board President Keith Gottlieb said.

CDEC's bylaws require the co-op's annual meeting to be held yearly in either April or May. No bylaw amendments were on the agenda for this year's meeting. Trustees will retain their respective seats until the next election cycle, pursuant to bylaws.

The activities held during CDEC's annual meeting registration, leading up to the co-op's business meeting, also have been canceled, including the Grants Recreation Dept.'s monthly "fun run," Cibola General Hospital's health fair and the National Park Service's Junior Ranger Day.

"CDEC would like to make note that the April edition of *enchantment* magazine, which is mailed monthly to our co-op members, was printed before cancellation of this year's annual meeting and events. We ask that our members disregard the meeting notices contained in it," CDEC Member Services Manager Mac Juarez said.

In addition to closing its office doors to the public until further notice, CDEC is highly encouraging payment of electric and Red Bolt Broadband bills by internet, telephone, U.S. mail and by secure night-drops at CDEC's Grants and Gallup offices. The co-op will accept payment arrangements by phone, fax, email and through our website.

All other business with CDEC must be done by telephone, email, or video conferencing, Juarez said.

"We ask for the public's patience and understanding during this difficult time, as CDEC has implemented an emergency operations plan, requiring various employees to work remotely in compliance with social distancing guidelines adopted by state and federal agencies," Juarez said.

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Finally, to meet the increased demand for internet service in Grants and Milan, CDEC is making **free** WiFi available at Fire and Ice Park and Riverwalk Amphitheater in Grants, and Mirabal and Elkins parks in Milan. Additional parks are expected to be added.

“The COVID-19 outbreak has hindered efforts by CDEC’s Red Bolt Broadband and other providers to complete in-home internet installations,” Juarez said. “Until it is deemed safe – by the CDC and other health experts – to enter homes, we are providing these temporary solutions to help those who rely on the internet for business, education and other needs.”

CDEC is working to prevent any prolonged service disruptions to either its electric distribution system or its internet service, as measures have also been implemented to minimize COVID-19 risk among co-op line crews and internet techs.

If you have questions or further needs, please call CDEC’s Grants office at (505) 285-6656 or its Gallup office at (505) 863-3641.

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