

The Voice of New Mexico's  
Rural Electric Cooperatives

# enchantment

## JEMEZ MOUNTAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

OCTOBER 2023



### Dispatch: The Nerve Center of Outage Restoration

While gathered together for this photo, it is usually one dispatcher per shift coordinating outage restoration for JMEC members. **Page 5**

Photo: Anthony Vigil, Miguel Rivera, Joaquin Garcia, Fred Baca, Adrian Orozco. Not pictured, Alvin Romero.



Jemez Mountains Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**CEO and General Manager**  
Michael W. Hastings

**Address**  
19365 S.R. 84/285  
Hernandez, New Mexico 87537

**Telephone:** 505-753-2105

**Toll-Free:** 888-755-2105

**Emergency Outages:** 877-753-0095

**Website:** [www.jemezcoop.org](http://www.jemezcoop.org)

**Office Hours**  
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (M-F)

### Board of Trustees

**President, Dennis Trujillo**  
District 1 - Jemez Springs, Jemez Pueblo, Zia Pueblo, Surrounding areas

**Vice President, Manuel Bustos**  
District 5 - La Mesilla, San Pedro & north up to Alcalde

**Secretary, John Ramon Vigil**  
District 4 - Santa Clara Pueblo north to Medanales including Lyden & La Canova west of the Rio Grande River

**Treasurer, Dolores G. McCoy**  
District 2 - Cuba, surrounding areas in Sandoval, McKinley & San Juan Counties

**Dennis Gallegos, District 3** - Abiquiu & the Cañones, Coyote, Gallina, Llaves & Lindrih areas

**Lucas Cordova, Jr., District 4** - Chili, Chamita & other areas from Santa Clara Pueblo north to Medanales including Lyden & La Canova west of the Rio Grande River

**Elias Coriz, District 5** - Chimayo & all other areas in Rio Arriba County east of the Rio Grande River

**Danny Velarde, District 5** - Velarde, Dixon & other areas located in Rio Arriba County east of the Rio Grande River

**Marcelina Martinez, District 6** - Santa Cruz & surrounding areas located in Santa Fe County

**Henry Roybal, District 6** - Nambe, Pojoaque, surrounding areas located in Santa Fe County

**Marissa Maestas-Muller, Trustee-At-Large** - represents the entire cooperative area at large

## National Cooperative Month – It's Personal

Rural electric cooperatives serve 42 million people including those in almost all of the persistent poverty counties in the U.S. They do it, we do it, because it's personal.

Members elect the governing leaders of Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., from among their fellow members – neighbors served by the cooperative just like they are. In all likelihood, you know personally the trustee elected to represent your district.

**JMEC employees take personal pride in the service they provide to members.**

In late summer there had been an elusive outage on the San Ildefonso circuit and it took a process of elimination to find the source. Eventually, JMEC found that a transformer in

a member's yard had deteriorated over time due to a previous lightning strike somewhere along the line. After two of our young linemen – Brandon Bustos and Jonathan Romero – came to replace the transformer, the member called JMEC to commend their actions, remarking on the time they took to explain the steps, the polite manner and respect shown to him, the safety precautions taken throughout.

In another recent instance one of our team, Lenny Ortiz, went out of

his way to respond to a member's concern. Ortiz would say he was just doing his job, but the member said, "As a customer and stakeholder, receiving that kind of customer support and engagement is really special and greatly appreciated. Lenny has consistently been understanding, supportive and made it his business to make something 'right.'"

**Among the trustees and staff, doing well for members is personal. For them, every day is about the member and every month is Cooperative Month.**

**"As a customer and stakeholder, receiving that kind of customer support and engagement is really special and greatly appreciated."**

## JMEC - IN THIS ISSUE



### Pages 4, 5, 28

- National Cooperative Month - It's Personal
- Dispatch: The Nerve Center of Outage Restoration



### Page 8

- Employee in the Spotlight: Miguel Rivera



### Page 25

- U.S. Forest Service Confirms Cerro Pelado Fire Caused by Pile Burns



### Page 29

- 2023 Annual Meeting Lookback

## Dispatch: The Nerve Center of Outage Restoration



While one dispatch team member mans each shift, we asked all of them to come in at one time so we could capture their photo for this story.

**Power goes out. You call. Maybe your neighbors call. Maybe hundreds or thousands of others call JMEC's outage hotline – 877.753.0095 – all at the same time. All those calls go to one place – dispatch. So, what's that like?**

“There’s a rush of adrenaline when a large outage hits,” said Anthony Vigil, dispatcher. “You go from no activity to hundreds of calls on your screen, half are not mapped in, people are calling in but it’s for their aunts’ or grandparents’ outage rather than their own so you have to be calm, sort it out, return calls to people whose calls were logged into the system but don’t live where the bigger outage is just to make sure they are not experiencing a separate outage. There is a lot going on behind the scenes.”

There sure is. Vigil has been with the department a year and a half, the shortest tenure of the six-member dispatch team. Let’s meet them and find out what really goes on behind the scenes of an outage.

### THE TEAM

**Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative’s six dispatchers – Fred Baca, Joaquin Garcia, Adrian Orozco, Alvin Romero, Anthony Vigil and supervisor Miguel Rivera – work together so tightly, they can practically finish each other’s sentences.**

“This is the longest we have had a group work together,” said Rivera. “Most have been here more than four years, Alvin’s been here more than 10 and Anthony, he is our newest with a year and a half under his belt. They all treat each other like family; show up for shifts bringing each other food or drinks. No one calls in to say they won’t make it. They all work tremendously hard to make it easy to work together.”

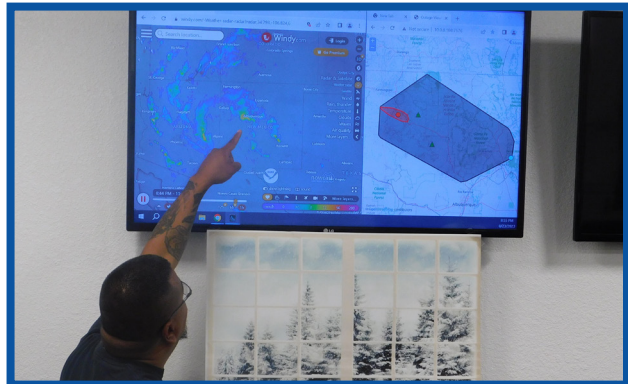
Each works four 10-hour shifts, with an overlap on each shift so the incoming dispatcher can get status updates. Each dispatcher mans the department on his own and coordinates outage recovery like a traffic officer in a busy intersection, communicating with members, linemen and any other staff needed to help restore power. When the outage is large, he calls in support.

**“It is difficult to express the relief you feel when you hear the next guy come through the door in the middle of an outage,”** Rivera added. **“I will come in as needed or remote in to support. In a big outage I have come in to see one guy on the phone and another is next to him taking notes for him.”**

### THE SKILLS

“You have to be a people person and be pretty decent in your communications skills,” said Vigil. “No one likes having their power out so naturally members are very frustrated when they call in. We need to listen to them and also learn what we can from them about the outage.”

Rivera said it is difficult to pre-qualify a potential hire for dispatch other than determining if the candidate is



Joaquin Garcia is showing one of the many screens dispatch used to track outages.

computer literate and demonstrates that they want to do a good job. “It is a pretty demanding position,” he added. **“We are here 24/7, 365 days a year, weekends, holidays.”**

### THE TECHNOLOGY

This is why it is important for members to make sure JMEC has their current phone number – the cooperative’s outage call management system uses the member’s phone number on file, and automated questions, to link a member’s account to an outage. The IVR (interactive voice recording) system is what allows a single dispatcher to intake hundreds of calls at once. It also allows members to leave voice messages.

*Story continues on page 28.*

## Employee in the Spotlight: Miguel Rivera



**More than five years ago, Miguel Rivera was recruited into Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s dispatch department by Manuel Perez who was its supervisor at the time. "He told me it was a cool place to work – good people and a good career, so I applied and was hired," he said. "It turned out to be all what he said and more."**

Rivera said he was nervous at the start. "Oh, 100 percent!" he said. "You realize quickly that you have a big responsibility in keeping the system up and going so, I did not want to get an outage on my shift. It was nerve wracking for the first few months."

He seems to have gotten the hang of it. Rivera was made dispatch supervisor about two years into the job after Perez moved on. He has since built an incredible team of six dispatchers, including himself – Fred Baca, Joaquin Garcia, Adrian Orozco, Alvin Romero and Anthony Vigil – that work together seamlessly to manage outages, do after-hours reconnects, work with emergency services when there are structure fires or vehicle v pole incidents and more.

**"My success is because of these guys," Rivera said. "I can't say enough good things about them; just their commitment to do a good job. Makes me proud to be a part of the dispatch shift rotation."**

Rivera, who lives with his wife and two young children in Santa Fe, gets up at 4 a.m., and is at his station by 6. There is no routine day. When it is quieter, he can be creating training simulations of actual outages to run through with his team but at any moment, the dispatch automated systems can explode with calls and dots swarming on the outage maps. At that

moment, all attention zeroes in on locating the outage, communicating with members and coordinating with linemen to restore power.

"I like being able to assist in members getting their power back on," he said. "I know it is frustrating for them and we do very much appreciate their patience as all our resources focus on fixing the outage."

**Since taking on the supervisor role Rivera has led the integration of better tools and technology in the department, like the Calls Manager automated phone system, additional monitors for each computer, even leveraging freeware such as Google Maps, weather maps and GPS converter maps. Comments from those who nominated him for this Employee in the Spotlight recognition spoke to his leadership:**

"Miguel makes sure his department is up to date with modern technology and that it runs smoothly. He has great member services skills, stays calm through outages and is the one to handle hard situations. He is detail oriented, a problem solver and has done a great job getting the dispatch department organized."

**He likes to stay available to support or trouble shoot even remotely when needed, so when away from work Rivera said he likes to hang out with his little boy and girl, and when camping, he stays local in the Jemez or Pecos mountains.**



*Miguel is pictured with his wife Erryka, daughter Milyana and son Angelo.*

**U.S. Forest Service Confirms Cerro Pelado Fire Caused by Pile Burns**



**In a news release, the USDA U.S. Forest Service said the April 2022 Cerro Pelado Fire was caused by pile burns set earlier by the Forest Service. The wildfire overtook more than 45,000 acres in the Jemez Mountains. From the release, the statement by USDA Forest Service Southwestern Regional Forester Michiko Martin reads, in part:**

“Our investigation has confirmed that the Cerro Pelado Fire on the Jemez Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest was caused by a holdover fire from the Pino West Piles Prescribed Fire, a debris pile burn. A holdover fire is a fire that smolders undetectably.

“Escaped prescribed fires in 2022 led the Forest Service to implement a 90-day national pause on prescribed fire and review required changes to the prescribed fire program. The Southwestern Region, including the Santa Fe National Forest, has since implemented all recommendations from the National Prescribed Fire Program Review. Specific to the Southwestern Region, firefighters now monitor pile burns using handheld devices and drones that can detect whether heat is present.”

On the U.S. Forest Service’s National Prescribed Fire Program Review webpage, it states, “On average, the Forest Service ignites about 4,500 prescribed fires each year, treating about 1.3 million acres across the National Forest System. Almost all prescribed fires—99.84%—go according to plan. However, we cannot underestimate how destructive prescribed fire escapes can be.”

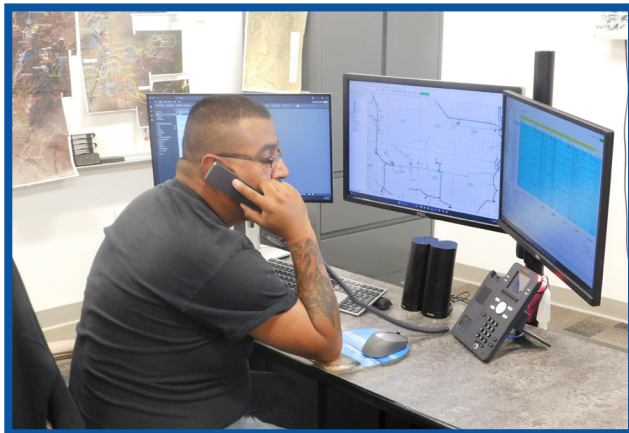


## Dispatch: The Nerve Center of Outage Restoration

Story continued from page 5.

Once the IVR system recognizes a member account, it is automatically populated to the live JMEC outage map and alerts dispatch to a member reporting an outage. “The dispatcher will call select members back to help narrow down where the problem is and will go through sometimes hundreds of voicemails to see if any member reported seeing a cause or any detail that will help speed the crew getting to and correcting the outage,” said Rivera.

With a confirmed outage, the dispatcher contacts the lineman on call and gives him a report that includes what information he has as to the location and cause of the outage and sends an update internally. When the lineman



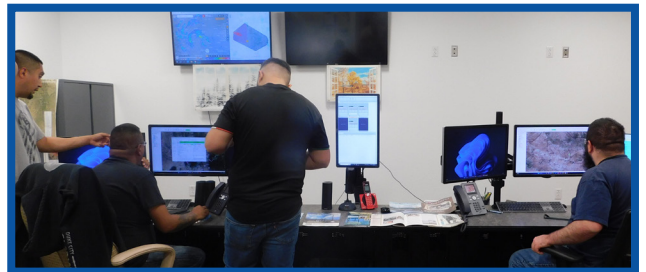
Joaquin Garcia works with the lifelines of dispatch – the phone and monitors.

confirms power is restored, the IVR system calls back members who chose the option to be notified.

“Alvin has been here long enough to remember when this technology came in, about 2016,” said Rivera. “Before Calls Manager, it was handwritten notes, phone calls, paper records. The new meters now being installed are another game changer. They will tell us there’s an outage, where and the likely cause without our having to depend on members to report it!”

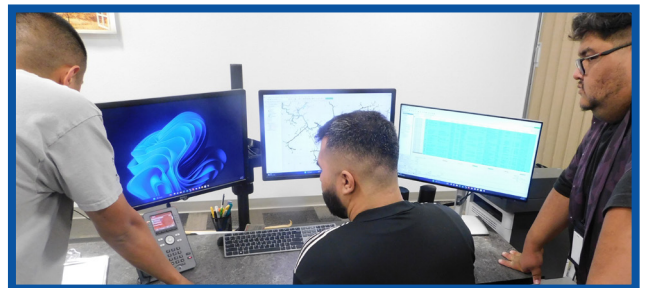
### TEAM WORK

“Dennis Astley (JMEC assistant general manager and professional engineer) did something really special,” Rivera added. “He took us into the field, showed us devices and explained, for example, what happens when the outage is related to a fuse, transformer, OCR or substation. That has helped us better understand what is happening and why in outages.”



While a single dispatcher mans each shift, in a large outage supervisor Rivera often remotes in or comes in to find a second team member helping out.

Rivera also works with Steven Martinez, GIS supervisor, to make needed corrections to the cooperative’s mapping system. “If we notice that what the linemen report on the scene and what we see on the map don’t match, Steven and I jump in the car, go see for ourselves and make the corrections.”



The dispatch team is busy whether there is an outage or not – training, supporting reconnects, updating records and more.

When not managing outages the dispatch team runs through training scenarios developed by Rivera, works with meter readers on after hours reconnects, does the endless work of address corrections and more. Rivera said dispatch touches every JMEC department from accounting to warehouse for one reason or another. “There is no down time.”



JMEC dispatch department team members, left to right, Miguel Rivera, Adrian Orozco, Fred Baca, Joaquin Garcia, Anthony Vigil. Not pictured above, Alvin Romero.

2023 Annual Meeting Lookback



**We had more than 2,000 people at the 2023 Annual Meeting of Members of Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative, Inc., on Sunday, August 20, 2023, at La Luz Campground, which might be a record!**

Of those 2,000-plus more than 700 members registered, allowing us to make quorum and members voted to approve the proposed updates to eight bylaws – thank you! We so appreciated the member participation in the business portion of the meeting – a good time to see JMEC trustees and hear in person updates on the many programs underway to improve the operations of the cooperative and electrical service throughout all of our service territory.

Members and their families enjoyed Rudy's BBQ, Lovin Oven cookies and the music of Severo y Grupo Fuego – so good! Kids had fun at the face painting, bounce house, pole climbing demonstrations and giveaways. Everybody looked forward to their chance to win one of the amazing door prizes and grand prizes. Congrats to Sixto Sandoval, winner of the Chevy Malibu; Debra Garcia and Mary Lasiewicki, winners of the Polaris 4X4s; and Ralph Garcia and George Sandoval, winners of the big flatscreen TVs.

Just being together, enjoying each other, reminds us that being a member of an electric cooperative is all about community.

