

# Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Power Outages Affect Baca Residents**

Monte Vista—San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative extends apologies to residents of the Baca Grande and Crestone area who were affected by a series of power outages and blinks in October. On October 6, 7 and 11, cable failures affected Chalet I and II areas. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, a cable failure affected the Grants area.

Terryl Jensen, manager of system operations at SLVREC, explained that in late September, a localized lightning storm centered above the Crestone area produced several direct ground hits. Although the storm did not hit electrical equipment directly, it did send electric current surging through the ground. This current was strong enough to damage underground power lines.

“It is typical to see underground cable failure after a severe lightning storm like the one on September 28,” Jensen said. “It usually takes about a week or so before the damage created by the lightning causes the cable to deteriorate to the point of creating outages.”

In a separate and unrelated incident, on October 17, a line recloser device operated causing a blink for the affected consumers. Line reclosers are automatic devices that bear some similarities to the circuit breakers in a residential electric system. Unlike a circuit breaker however, a recloser will try to restore power automatically after being tripped. After the first three attempts, the recloser device will remain off until it the circuit is manually restored.

The more extensive problems in the Baca Grande were related to underground power cables that were installed over thirty years ago. Then, the state-of-the-art product used for power delivery had cross-linked polyethylene insulation with a thirty year life expectancy. Today’s technology has improved underground cable significantly. Now, SLVREC and most other utilities use underground power cable with EPR rubber insulation. This product holds up much better under conditions like the ones experienced this October.

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“In 2006 and 2007 we spent in excess of a quarter million dollars on electric system upgrades in the Baca Grande and Crestone area,” Jensen said. “Over the past several years, we have worked on a number of projects designed to improve power delivery for our Crestone area members. We are focusing on the areas where the cable has failed more than once to improve reliability for everyone.”

For example, in 2006, the cooperative replaced the cable along Baca Grant Way and Moon Light Way. In that same year, the cooperative initiated the first phase of underground line replacements in Casita Park. In prior years, the cooperative upgraded the Moffat substation, rebuilt the power line from Moffat substation to the Baca Grande and installed sectionalizing devices in the Baca to help limit the extent of outages and to expedite repairs.

Jensen said, “The sectionalizing work helped us during these outages. Our crews did a great job of pinpointing and repairing the damaged areas as quickly as possible. We are fully aware that outages create inconveniences for our members. We appreciate the patience that our members demonstrated while we repaired these difficult problems.”

The cooperative plans to do more work to upgrade the electric system serving the Baca Grande over the next few years. However, according to SLVREC CEO John Villyard, work plans must balance needs throughout the cooperative’s entire service area.

The cooperative strives to undertake balanced work plans that keep expenses close to level from year to year. Consequently, improvement work for any single area within the cooperative’s service territory may be spread over many years. In this way, SLVREC helps to keep rates stable. As a cooperative, SLVREC does not operate for a profit. Rates are set to cover expenses. Having a stable work plan from year to year benefits all members.

SLVREC provides electric service to over 12,000 meters in a seven-county area that stretches from Poncha Pass southward to the New Mexico border and from Spring Creek Pass on the west to the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range on the east. The cooperative was formed in 1937 and is the second oldest electric cooperative in Colorado. To learn more about SLVREC, visit [www.slvrec.com](http://www.slvrec.com).