

Co-op starting metering project

- John Larson - El Defensor Chieftain staff writer - Updated Jun 30, 2016

Socorro Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees voted June 22 to go forward with a pilot project to test the effectiveness of a new automated metering system.

The proposed automated metering infrastructure will be using smart meters, freeing up SEC meter readers and linemen.

As discussed at the May 26 meeting of the board, the pilot project will be launched in the Magdalena, Alamo and Datil area.

"We'll be looking at the substation we're having problems with the reads coming in, and see how we can mitigate those issues with the pilot project," General Manager Joseph Herrera said. "These account for 15 percent of our meters. If successful – our objective is 98 percent effectiveness – then we will go with the entire cooperative."

The metering system, developed by Anixter International, should negate the need for physical meter reading on most residential electric meters, he said.

Herrera emphasizes that the pilot project limits financial exposure to the co-op.

"If doesn't work, if not it's not successful, then our costs are limited," he said.

The funding agency is Rural Utility Service.

According to Herrera, if all goes as planned, the pilot project will completed by the end of 2016.

Line Superintendent David Montoya commented that the automated metering move would help in more ways than one, and related a recent incident meter readers sometimes experience.

"We got a call from a member about a power line that she thought was hanging too low over her property," Montoya said.

He said he went to the member's residence and rang the doorbell.

"No one came and I rang it again, but still no one came to the door," he said. "Then I knocked on the outer security door. There was still no answer."

While waiting, Montoya said he figured he would go around the house and look at the power line himself to see if it was hanging too low.

"I walked around and the garage door opened and there was a woman pointing a gun at me," he said. "I had to convince her that I was from the co-op."

In other business, it was announced that the \$25 credit for registering at the annual meeting in April will apply to next month's electric bill.