

# ENERGYWISE

YOUR SAN MIGUEL POWER MEMBER NEWSLETTER



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Ridgway, CO 81432  
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**Both Offices Open:**  
M - TH • 7:00am – 5:30pm

[www.smpa.com](http://www.smpa.com)  
[www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower](https://www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower)

*In the event of a power outage, contact your local SMPA office to reach our 24-hour dispatch.*

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

[energywise@smpa.com](mailto:energywise@smpa.com)  
(970) 626-5549 x2120

## BE PREPARED FOR POWER OUTAGES:

- ✓ *Stock up on battery-powered flashlights and area lights*
- ✓ *A closed refrigerator will maintain a cool temperature for 2-3 hrs.*
- ✓ *Have a supply of shelf-stable food*

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(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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## FEATURE STORY

# Red Mountain Project Helps Keep the Lights On During Gold Mountain Fire

**When the Gold Mountain Fire started near Ouray last month, it tested more than the region's emergency response—it also tested the resilience of the local electric grid. Thanks to years of planning and investment, San Miguel Power Association's (SMPA) Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project played a critical role in maintaining reliable electric service to the City of Ouray throughout the incident.**

As SMPA's largest infrastructure investment to date, the project is replacing aging transmission infrastructure between Ouray and the Burro Bridge Substation, near Silverton with a modern, more reliable electrical system. The new transmission line features upgraded conductors, stronger poles, and a fiber optic communications network that improves system monitoring and control.

One of the project's most significant benefits is its ability to provide an alternate path for electricity to reach the City of Ouray and other parts of Ouray County. Without this project, a wildfire or other emergency affecting a single transmission corridor could significantly increase the risk of prolonged outages. Today, the partially-improved transmission system provides operators with greater flexibility to manage power flows when unexpected events occur.

During the Gold Mountain Fire, that flexibility proved invaluable.

As fire conditions evolved and emergency responders worked to contain the blaze, SMPA and its wholesale power provider were able to safely de-energize Ouray's primary energy feed, utilizing the Red Mountain transmission system to continue serving Ouray. Rather than losing power due to damage or precautionary operational changes, Ouray residents, businesses, medical facilities, and emergency services continued receiving reliable electric service throughout the event.



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**1:** Because the Gold Mountain Fire started near the City of Ouray, power over the Dallas Creek line, which is the primary feed for the City, was ordered to be shut off. Fortunately, power could be fed from the redundant Red Mountain Line.

"The Red Mountain Project is being built to improve reliability under exactly these kinds of challenging conditions," said SMPA CEO Brad Zaporski. "While no electric system can eliminate every risk posed by wildfires, this investment is giving us additional options that can help maintain service to our members when they need it most."

But the Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement project is only half-finished. Sections from the Burro Bridge substation to Idarado and from the Alpine Loop turnoff to Ouray still need to be re-built. Zaporski notes that, while the backup feed worked during the recent fire incident, members should not rest on those laurels. A completed line, which is scheduled to be in place in the fall of 2028 will increase reliability for Ouray County for many years into the future.

The project also reflects SMPA's long-term commitment to preparing for an increasingly challenging operating environment. Across its service territory, the cooperative continues investing in wildfire mitigation, system hardening, vegetation management, advanced monitoring technologies, and infrastructure improvements designed to reduce outage risks and improve restoration capabilities.



The Red Mountain Line feed has been partially improved through the Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project, which is currently scheduled to be completed in 2028. This line serves as a redundant power feed for Ouray County.

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**2:** The Red Mountain Line feed has been partially improved through the Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project, which is currently scheduled to be completed in 2028. This line serves as a redundant power feed for Ouray, Ridgway and the rest of Ouray County. It also improves broadband infrastructure. While the Gold Mountain Fire serves as a reminder of the wildfire risks facing southwestern Colorado, it also demonstrated the value of

investing in resilient infrastructure before emergencies occur. For SMPA members, the Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project represents more than replaced poles and wires—it represents a stronger, more dependable electric system capable of adapting to unforeseen challenges. During the Gold Mountain Fire, that investment delivered exactly what it was intended to provide: reliable power when the community needed it most.

## SMPA is a ‘Cooperative.’ What does that mean?

San Miguel Power Association is a Cooperative business. Cooperatives around the world operate according to a core set of principles that originated in 1844 from the first modern cooperative, the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in Rochdale, England. These principles, along with the co-op purpose of improving quality of life for their members, make electric co-ops different from other electric utilities.

### 7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

1

Voluntary & open membership

2

Democratic member control

3

Members' economic participation

4

Autonomy & independence

5

Education, training & information

6

Cooperation among cooperatives

7

Concern for community

## Solar Carports, EV Fleet Helps Lower SMPA Costs

Careful observers of the Ridgway SMPA Office location will have noticed two new structures in the yard. These carports, with mounted solar arrays, and Electric Vehicle (EV) charging ports were funded by Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grants, and serve a triple purpose:

### Equipment Protection and Quick Response

The inherent benefits of a carport are that they shield the parked vehicles and equipment beneath them from the sun and snow. This increases comfort and, in the winter, it can reduce outage and emergency response times of work crews who'll no longer need to clear snow before driving.

### Daytime EV Charging

Currently, using one electric fleet vehicle saves the co-op about \$3500 annually in fuel cost, compared to a gas-powered solution. As it is, the energy efficiency of electric vehicles provides enough incentive for SMPA to expand the EV portion of its fleet, but the ability to plug in and charge directly from solar photovoltaic energy is as close as possible to a free energy solution. The DC chargers mounted on the carports take solar first when it is available. This configuration makes the best use of this abundant resource.

### Expense Reduction and Peak Shaving with Batteries

The expected annual energy production of the two solar arrays is approximately 166,000 kWh. In a year, this should offset about 68% of the Ridgway office's total energy use.

Soon, the SMPA facilities will also include Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). Stored energy from the carport solar arrays can then be used as backup power for critical communication systems during an outage and--when there's no emergency--it can be deployed during times of peak demand to reduce the monthly wholesale power bill. This will lower pressure on our retail rates, which is great news for all SMPA members!



### LIMITED TIME OFFER

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970.729.8029 / [info@stellarair.pro](mailto:info@stellarair.pro)

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AN ELECTRIFY AND SAVE® PROGRAM

### GIVE BLOOD

[vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org)

### WEDNESDAY, AUG. 19

11:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.  
170 W. 10<sup>TH</sup> AVE., NUCLA

## SMPA POWER PLAY

**THIS MONTH'S PUZZLE:**  
TRY MY GREAT EBO SENSE STRATEGY

Hint: Save for Later

Last Month's Answer: ENHANCED FIRE MITIGATION  
Last Month's Winner: Kathy Cooper - Naturita, CO

SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER and be entered into a drawing for a fun prize to:

EnergyWise  
PO Box 1150  
Ridgway, CO 81432



Our offices will be closed on Mon., Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>. Basic services are always available at [smpa.smarthub.coop](http://smpa.smarthub.coop)