

Announcement

Capacity Supply Adequate for Winter Demand; Extreme Weather, Fuel and Energy Risks in New England and California are Top Reliability Concerns

November 18, 2020

ATLANTA – In its [2020–2021 Winter Reliability Assessment](#), NERC finds sufficient resource capacity is in place across North America to meet winter demand. Noting how extreme weather can challenge grid reliability in specific areas, the assessment closely examines this reliability risk and identifies higher risk areas that are susceptible to emergency operating actions.

During extreme and prolonged winter conditions, vital natural-gas fuel supplies for electricity generation can be at risk in New England, California and the southwestern United States. High reliance on natural gas-fired generation and limited natural gas infrastructure elevates reliability risk in these areas.

For this assessment, NERC analyzed severe weather scenarios that incorporated generation outages under peak load conditions. NERC noted particular reliability risk in areas within the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, the Canadian Maritimes, Texas, the Rocky Mountain Reserve Group and the Northwest Power Pool.

“Winter conditions challenge grid operators in many parts of North America. Our assessment looks at expected peak demand and the ability of the area resource mix to provide that demand under harsh winter conditions,” said Mark Olson, manager of Reliability Assessments. “Overall, industry takes winter reliability risks very seriously. Our extreme weather scenarios help stakeholders prepare for situations where winter conditions threaten resource adequacy, potentially forcing grid operators into emergency actions like demand curtailment.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, NERC also stresses a priority focus on protecting the workforce, including system and power plant operators. This year’s assessment highlights the below key findings for the upcoming winter season:

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- Sufficient capacity resources are expected to be in service.
- Fuel and energy assurance risk remains a reliability concern.
- Extreme weather continues to pose risk to bulk power system reliability.
- The ongoing pandemic is causing increased uncertainty in electricity demand projections and presents cyber security and operating risks.
- Post-2020 hurricane season restoration efforts may continue in hard-hit areas along the Gulf Coast, where storm damage has degraded the transmission system that supplies local areas.

Undertaken annually in coordination with the Regional Entities, NERC's *Winter Reliability Assessment* examines multiple factors that collectively provide deep and unique insights into reliability risk. These factors include resource adequacy, encompassing reserve margins and scenarios to identify operational risk; fuel assurance; and preparations to mitigate reliability concerns. The report encourages industry to discuss their plans and preparations to ensure reliability for the upcoming winter period.

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Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and the Electric Reliability Organization Enterprise serves to strengthen that fabric. The vision for the ERO Enterprise, which is comprised of NERC and the six Regional Entities, is a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system. Our mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.