

NEWS RELEASE: Electric Reliability Council of Texas Power Watch - Conservation Needed

ERCOT initiating level 1 emergency; Consumers asked to conserve 3-7 p.m. today

Austin, Aug.3, 2011 -- The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc. (ERCOT), system operator for the state's bulk transmission grid, initiated Energy Emergency Alert Level 1 at 2:50 p.m. when responsive reserves dropped below 2,300 megawatts (MW). Capacity is expected to be very tight over the peak today, and ERCOT operators are closely monitoring the situation.

"We expect to hit another all-time peak demand record today, so we are asking consumers and businesses to reduce their electricity use during peak electricity hours from 3 to 7 p.m.," said Kent Saathoff, vice president of system planning and operations.

Forecast for peak demand today is more than 68,684 MW, exceeding [yesterday's new all-time record](#) of 67,929 MW. Prior to this year, the record was 65,776 MW (Aug. 23, 2010).

"There's a possibility that we may have to go to a [level 2 emergency](#) today which authorizes operators to drop the interruptible loads – large customers paid to be dropped in a level 2 emergency. Dropping the load resources provides extra capacity for the remaining customers," Saathoff said.

"We're expecting record high temperatures and electricity demand to continue for the remainder of the week, so we are asking consumers and businesses to reduce their electricity as much as they are able for the remainder of the week," Saathoff said.

Emergency Procedures Background

The Energy Emergency Alert (EEA) procedures are a progressive series of steps that allow ERCOT to bring on power from other grids if available, beginning with a **Power Watch** (Energy Emergency Alert Level 1).

If the situation does not improve, ERCOT escalates to a **Power Warning** (Energy Emergency Alert Level 2), allowing operators to drop large commercial/industrial load resources under contract to be interrupted during an emergency.

If the capacity shortage is not relieved by the contract demand response, ERCOT escalates to a **Power Emergency** (Energy Emergency Alert Level 3) and will instruct utilities to reduce demand on the grid by conducting temporary outages at the local distribution level. These controlled temporary interruptions of electrical service – or rotating outages – typically last 15-45 minutes before being rotated to a different neighborhood.

Consumers should contact the utility company/ transmission provider listed on their electric bill for information about power outages at their homes or business, or about rotating outage procedures for their area.

[Energy Emergency Alert Communications](#)

Conservation Tips

Consumers can help by shutting off unnecessary lights and electrical appliances between 3 and 7 p.m., and delaying laundry and other activities requiring electricity-consuming appliances until later in the evening. Other conservation tips from the *Public Utility Commission's "Powerful Advice"* include:

- Turn off all unnecessary lights, appliances, and electronic equipment.
- When at home, close blinds and drapes that get direct sun, set air conditioning thermostats to 78 degrees or higher, and use fans in occupied rooms to feel cooler.
- When away from home, set air conditioning thermostats to 85 degrees and turn all fans off before you leave. Block the sun by closing blinds or drapes on windows that will get direct sun.
- Do not use your dishwasher, laundry equipment, hair dryers, coffee makers, or other home appliances during the peak hours of 3 to 7 p.m.
- Avoid opening refrigerators or freezers more than necessary.
- Use microwaves for cooking instead of an electric range or oven.
- Set your pool pump to run in the early morning or evening instead of the afternoon.

Businesses should minimize the use of electric lighting and electricity-consuming equipment as much as possible. Large consumers of electricity should consider shutting down or reducing non-essential production processes.

How to Track Electricity Demand

- View daily peak demand forecast and current load at <http://www.ercot.com/>
- View daily peak demands by the hour at this [link](#)
- Get real-time notices of energy emergency alerts by following [ERCOT on Twitter](#)

Consumer Assistance

- Public Utility Commission Consumer Hotline – 1-888-782-8777
- Office of Public Utility Counsel Consumer Assistance – 1-877-839-0363

Call Your Electric Utility for Information about Local Outages

ERCOT manages the state's high-voltage bulk electricity grid. For questions about local outages at your home or business, or questions about rotating outage procedures for your neighborhood, contact the utility company or transmission provider listed on your electric bill.

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ERCOT Region

The ERCOT Region includes Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, Corpus Christi, Abilene and the Rio Grande Valley. It does not include the El Paso area, the Texas Panhandle, Northeast Texas (Longview, Marshall and Texarkana), and Southeast Texas (Beaumont, Port Arthur, and the Woodlands).

[Region map](#)

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The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc., (ERCOT) manages the flow of electric power to approximately 23 million Texas customers – representing 85 percent of the state's electric load and 75 percent of the Texas land area. As the Independent System Operator for the region, ERCOT schedules power on an electric grid that connects 40,500 miles of transmission lines and more than 550 generation units. ERCOT also manages financial settlement for the competitive wholesale bulk-power market and administers customer switching for 6.6 million Texans in competitive choice areas. ERCOT is a membership-based 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation, governed by a board of directors and subject to oversight by the Public Utility Commission of Texas and the Texas Legislature.

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