



Millions of Americans in multiple states face elevated risk of winter power outages

## Description

**USA: Millions of people in multiple states are at an elevated risk of having power outages this winter.**

Texas, New England, the Great Lakes and the American Southeast are facing “unprecedented” and “widespread” reliability risks this winter, according to the 2023 Winter Assessment report of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the United States’ grid reliability coordinator.

Furthermore, NERC warned that large portions of America’s power grid that were not mentioned above are also at a high risk of having insufficient supplies of electricity during peak winter conditions. Energy insiders note that tight fuel supplies and an outdated electric grid are playing a critical role in possible blackouts.

The risks of power outages this winter will be compounded by the expected uptick in demand for energy used for heating. This, coupled with the rushed and ineffective transition to using primarily “clean” or renewable energy sources and underinvestment in more reliable sources like fossil fuel will make energy supplies far less reliable.

Todd Snitchler, president and CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association, writing an opinion piece for *Utility Dive*, noted that many people still remember just how deadly it can be to lose power during winter.

“The terrible toll of Winter Storm Uri is a sad reminder of just how devastating and deadly it can be to have the power go out during an extended period of cold weather,” he wrote.

## American power grid dangerously outdated, not prepared for coming winter

Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm noted in a brief last month that around 70 percent of the nation’s power grid is more than 25 years old. Conservative estimates this year suggest that the cost of

providing critical infrastructure upgrades to America's power grid is at least \$4 trillion, provided that the U.S. continues to supplement energy demand with nuclear power. Without nuclear energy, the price tag jumps by at least \$500 million.

The administration of President Joe Biden has only authorized \$13 billion in funding meant to be a stopgap measure to "modernize and expand" the power grid.

"Given the politics involved in any legislation, it'll take some time before any of these funds trickle down to the states that need the funds," noted Eric Hendrick, senior consultant in risk management at Customized Energy Solutions.

But even if the federal government provided the country with all of the funding it needs to properly upgrade the electrical grid, energy specialists warn that it is far too late for those upgrades to take effect in the coming winter, or even for the next one.

"There is a significant gap to upgrading aging grid infrastructure to ... maintain reliability, and we're running out of time," said energy analyst Kim Getgen. "Upgrading aging infrastructure, system hardening and resilience measures while complying with the evolving set of new cyber and physical security threats will require even more investment."

"It's important to remember that something as complex as [the electricity grid](#) takes time to change," noted Ted Kury, director of energy studies at the [University of Florida](#). Kury said regulatory process for new utility projects, including repairs and upgrades, moves very slowly no matter how much money is thrown at it. If investments were made today, it will take years before people feel the impact.

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1. Economy-Business-Fin/Invest
2. Main
3. Survival-Prepping-Security

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