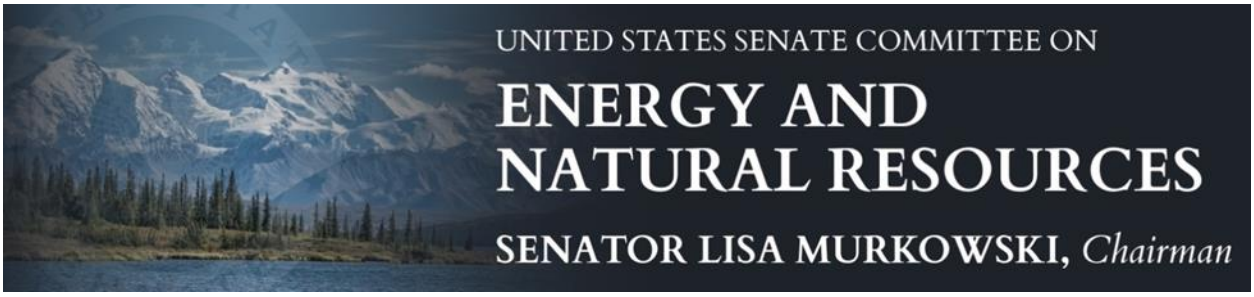


**Opening Statement**
**Full Committee Hearing on Blackstart**
**Chairman Lisa Murkowski**
**October 11, 2018**

Good morning the Committee will come to order. We are here this morning to have a discussion on blackstart, which is the process for returning energy to the power grid after a system-wide blackout.

You don't want to imagine it, but there's probably enough movies that are out there that we don't need to imagine anymore. But, just imagine a scenario where everyone living within an interconnected electrical system loses power. Here on the East Coast, that would effectively mean a blackout that spans from Maine to Florida, all the way to Minnesota back to Louisiana. Hundreds of millions of people would be left in the dark, power lines no longer energized, and generating stations would be off.

More practically, it means that your lights would be off, but also your air conditioning is out, kind of a miserable, ugly morning out there and you're going to notice something like that. Appliances like your oven, your refrigerator, your ability to charge your cell phone, no longer be working.

A system-wide blackout is mostly the stuff of nightmares and Hollywood thrillers, but it's also a high-consequence threat that our nation must be prepared to respond to. The United States has never seen a blackout of this kind, but I have described of the scope and that is very fortunate, but the increasing risks presented by cyberattacks and the threats of electro-magnetic pulse and solar storms make it more important that we be prepared.

The question we have to be able to answer is: should all of the grid go down, how will we restart our generating stations, repower the lines, and safely deliver electricity to homes and businesses?

The process for returning energy to the power grid after a system-wide blackout is known as blackstart. The nuts and bolts of this process are and should be closely held, but we can certainly discuss the theory and necessity of blackstart in an open setting, as we're doing here this morning. America can't operate without electricity service, and we must have plans in place to restore power to our grid.

A system-wide blackout is a low probability event, but similar to a cyber or nuclear attack, the electric utility industry has to be prepared. And there are a variety of everyday threats to the grid

that could cause it—like what happened on August 14, 2003, when a tree that had grown too near a power line started a "cascading" blackout which caused widespread power outages for some 50 million people across the Midwest, the Northeast, and the Canadian province of Ontario.

A cascading blackout occurs when the failure of one interconnected part of the system triggers the failure of successive parts – the domino effect of power transmission failure. Thankfully, the cascading event in August 2003 did not involve the entire interconnection and force us to engage in a real-world test of blackstart procedures, but it could.

I certainly hope our nation never faces a situation where a total restart of the electric system is required, but it is critical, I think we would acknowledge that there be a plan in place should the worst happen.

The panel that we have this morning, an impressive group of experts, have all spent time thinking about and working on this issue. I thank each of you for making yourselves available this morning, we had to reschedule this hearing from an earlier time so I appreciate your flexibility; and again, thank you for being here to have this important discussion.

With that I turn to my colleague, Senator Cantwell.

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