

ERCOT Statement on 2/2 Grid Emergency Event

My name is John Dumas. I am Director of Wholesale Market Operations at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc. (ERCOT). On behalf of ERCOT, I have been asked to describe the grid emergency events affecting the ERCOT system on February 2, 2011. ERCOT appreciates the opportunity to address the Committee as it reviews issues regarding system reliability.

On February 2, 2011, ERCOT experienced outages across the state of approximately 82 generating units representing more than 8,000 MW of generation. This included generating units that were online that tripped offline and units that unsuccessfully attempted to come online.

In many cases, the extremely cold ambient temperatures combined with high winds causing problems with plant control systems such as plant transmitters, transducers, or valves. Many of the outaged generating units returned to service in time for the next morning's peak. In addition, ERCOT deployed other emergency tools at its disposal as grid operator, including responsive reserves and emergency interruptible load service. Nevertheless, ERCOT was required to order rolling outages throughout its region to address the situation.

During the morning and afternoon of February 2, ERCOT issued appeals for energy conservation. ERCOT also provided instructions to restore firm load as generating capacity became available and the loads moderated. By the early afternoon, ERCOT had recalled all curtailed firm load. To ensure it could maintain system stability, ERCOT remained on alert due to freezing temperatures that continued throughout Texas into February 3-4, 2011.

Due to the cold weather, ERCOT set a new winter peak record of 56,493 MW at 7:15 P.M. on February 2, 2011. ERCOT again set a new winter peak the next week: the peak on February 10, 2011 hit 57,282 MW. Notably, ERCOT set a new peak record of 65,776 MW in the summer of 2010.

On February 3, 2011, ERCOT experienced significant instability in the electrical system in the South Texas region. Because several generating units at a combined cycle facility tripped off line in the South Texas region, low voltage conditions resulted in rolling outages in communities in South Texas. South Texas transmission operators managed the situation with controlled rotating outages until they were able to retain balanced load and generation by the early morning hours of February 4, 2011.

The ERCOT region experienced another freezing weather event during the week of February 7, 2011, but operations on the ERCOT system were normal.

ERCOT has expressed its appreciation for the sacrifices of Texas residents who were without power during the rotating outages, and we also appreciate the conservation efforts by consumers during this emergency situation as well as load resources in our demand response program. We also want to thank the media for their assistance in getting information out to the public about the need to conserve.

I also want to note the support and assistance ERCOT received from the transmission providers and generation owners in our region, the Public Utility Commission of Texas, the Railroad Commission and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

ERCOT is very proud of the great work by the ERCOT operators in handling what could have been a disastrous situation for the entire state if they had not taken the quick action necessary to preserve the security of the grid.