

Texas Lost Electricity During Cold Snap that Froze Wind, Natural Gas, and Nuclear-Power Equipment

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Fifty people have died so far in Texas due to a cold snap that caused failure to provide electricity after wind turbines locked up, pipes froze in natural gas plants, and a nuclear reactor went dark when a five-foot section of uninsulated pipe seized up. In short, Texas power producers failed to adequately winter-proof their systems. The state's grid operator, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, underestimated its need for reserve power capacity before the crisis, and then moved too slowly to institute rolling blackouts. An estimated 4.5-million people lost power this week. Some North Texans who were lucky enough to have power in their homes were hit with astronomically high electric bills, including one customer who was billed \$17,000. – GEG

UPDATE: ERCOT, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, is responsible for managing the flow of electricity to the homes of over 26 million residents of Texas. Four out of 15 members live out-of-state and have now resigned amid growing criticism of the agency.

As Texans cranked up their heaters early Monday to combat plunging temperatures, a record surge of electricity demand set off a disastrous chain reaction in the state's power grid.

Wind turbines in the state's northern Panhandle locked up. Natural gas plants shut down when frozen pipes and components shut off fuel flow. A South Texas nuclear reactor went dark after a five-foot section of uninsulated pipe seized up. Power outages quickly spread statewide – leaving millions shivering in their homes for days, with deadly consequences.

It could have been far worse: Before dawn on Monday, the state's grid operator was "seconds and minutes" away from an uncontrolled blackout for its 26 million customers, its CEO has said. Such a collapse occurs when operators lose the ability to manage the crisis through rolling blackouts; in such cases, it can take weeks or months to fully restore power to customers.

Monday was one of the state's coldest days in more than a century – but the unprecedented power crisis was hardly unpredictable after Texas had experienced a similar, though less severe, disruption during a 2011 cold snap. Still, Texas power producers failed to adequately winter-proof their systems. And the state's grid operator underestimated its need for reserve power capacity before the crisis, then moved too slowly to tell utilities to institute rolling blackouts to protect against a grid meltdown, energy analysts, traders and economists said.

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<https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2021/02/electric-customers-north-texas-stuck-electric-bills-high-17000-following-cold-snap/>