

2026 Energy Emergency Alert Overview

When electric supply and demand can't be balanced with normal procedures, ERCOT will implement additional actions to avoid the need to enter emergency operations, including starting additional generation, reducing operating reserve levels, and deploying designated demand response programs. If operating reserves continue to drop, ERCOT begins emergency operations using three levels of Energy Emergency Alerts (EEAs). These levels provide access to resources only available during emergency conditions to protect the reliability of the electric system. ERCOT currently has about 2,500 MW of additional capacity available when it enters emergency conditions.

EEA levels and actions



EEA LEVEL 1

If operating reserves drop below 2,500 MW and are not expected to recover within 30 minutes, ERCOT actions include:

Bringing any additional available generation online

Increasing other generation supplies, including:

Importing available generation from neighboring electric grids:
up to 1,220 MW

Switchable generation that can serve multiple electric grids:
up to 2,184 MW



EEA LEVEL 2

If operating reserves drop below 2,000 MW and are not expected to recover within 30 minutes, or frequency drops below 59.91 Hz for 15 minutes, actions include:

Request energy conservation (if not already in effect) from public, including government and municipal agencies: # MW vary

Reduce power by deploying remaining demand response programs, including:

Deploying operating reserves carried by Load Resources (some large industrial customers who are paid to reduce their power):
up to 1,000 MW

Load management programs from transmission companies: 70-300MW, depending on the season

Voltage reduction by transmission companies: 1,200-1,300 MW, depending on the season



EEA LEVEL 3

If operating reserves drop below 1,500 MW, or the grid's frequency level drops below 59.8 Hz for any period of time, ERCOT actions include:

Instructing transmission and distribution service providers/companies to reduce demand on the electric system, which occurs through the use of controlled outages – these outages impact all customer classes, including residential, commercial, and industrial

[Additional information on EEA 1](#)

[Additional information on EEA 2](#)

[Additional information on EEA 3](#)

Note: Some steps may occur simultaneously and do not include additional voluntary demand response programs, where electric service from other ERCOT business and residential customers is interrupted during emergencies.

(1 MW is enough to serve about 250 residential customers during ERCOT peak hours). These capacity figures are planning estimates; actual availability will vary based on resource-specific circumstances at the time of the energy emergency.

Controlled outages

Controlled outages are electric service interruptions, ordered by ERCOT but implemented by transmission and distribution service providers, to quickly reduce electric demand, balance the grid, and prevent an uncontrolled system-wide outage. They are used as a last resort to bring operating reserves back to a safe level and maintain system frequency.

Each utility is responsible for deciding how to decrease demand in their respective service area(s). ERCOT provides an amount, in megawatts, by which each utility is required to reduce demand, based on their percentage of historic peak demand. Once ERCOT orders the outages to begin, these utilities then manage the outage on their local system. ERCOT does not have oversight into these outage plans.

Controlled outages are also referred to as load shed. Current [load shed tables](#) are updated annually.

ERCOT has initiated controlled outages four times since the grid operator was established:

- December 22, 1989: **500 MW**
- April 17, 2006: **1,000 MW**
- February 2, 2011: **4,000 MW**
- February 15-18, 2021: **20,000 MW**

Critical Needs Reminder

If you have critical medical needs, it's important to contact your local electric utility ahead of a need, that way you are registered in the utility's system, and they have awareness of your medical needs. Also, it is important to have a backup plan for any emergency situation, not just energy-related scenarios.