POST-EVENT REPORT

Winter Storm Fern – January 2026

Summary

During Winter Storm Fern, ERCOT successfully managed the Texas electric grid through a period of extreme cold and freezing precipitation, utilizing available tools and resources to ensure electricity demand was met safely and reliably. The statewide grid performed well; ERCOT did not need to call for conservation, did not issue an Energy Emergency Alert (EEA), and there were **no systemwide power outages**.

ERCOT's pre-storm preparation included working with the generation and transmission operators to meet the anticipated high demand. ERCOT also worked closely with state and federal partners before and during the storm, including the Texas Energy Reliability Council (TERC), Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Additionally, ERCOT collaborated with large customers (such as data centers and crypto facilities) for their awareness of grid conditions.

Since 2021, ERCOT, PUCT, Texas Legislature, and stakeholders have worked collaboratively to strengthen the ERCOT grid's reliability and resiliency. While work will continue, these improvements have made a positive impact.

Winter Storm Preparation

Key preparations and improvements included:

- **Mandatory weatherization and inspections**
  Power plants and transmission facilities are required to be weatherized for extreme weather events. ERCOT conducts regular inspections and plans to complete at least 450 inspections during this winter season.

- **More reserve power available**
  ERCOT increased the amount of backup electricity available to respond quickly if a power plant unexpectedly goes offline.

- **Earlier and more flexible grid operations**
  ERCOT can bring power generation online earlier during periods of high demand to reduce risk during extreme weather.

- **Leveraging Real-Time Co-optimization Plus Batteries (RTC+B)**
  A new market design change implemented in December 2025 better optimizes energy reserves with real-time energy needs and incorporates battery resources, improving grid flexibility and stability.

- **Backup fuel options for generators**
  Some power plants now have additional on-site fuel available if natural gas supplies are constrained.

- **Improved coordination with state agencies**
  ERCOT strengthened communication and information sharing with emergency management and reliability partners.

- **TCEQ enforcement discretion and Department of Energy (DOE) Orders obtained in advance of potential emergency operations and are used when necessary.**

Winter Storm Management

ERCOT managed grid operations around the clock, balancing electricity supply and demand throughout Winter Storm Fern. Electricity demand was high but **lower than originally forecast**, primarily due to two factors:

- **Weather conditions**
  Increased cloud cover over parts of North Texas and Coastal Texas led to slightly warmer temperatures than expected in those areas, reducing usage of heaters, which lowered demand.

- **School and business closures**
  Widespread closures across the state lowered electricity use, particularly during daytime hours.

Some localized outages did occur due to ice accumulation on power lines and other conditions (trees falling on lines, etc.). These were managed by local electric utilities and were **not related to issues on the ERCOT grid**.

Communicating with Texans

ERCOT provided early notice and frequent updates before and during the storm.

- On January 21, ERCOT issued a **Weather Watch** to alert Texans of expected extreme cold and higher electricity demand with the potential for lower reserves.
- ERCOT shared consistent updates through a news release, social media posts, website messages, and the ERCOT mobile app alert, in both English and Spanish.
- The public dashboards on ERCOT.com provided stakeholders real-time information on grid conditions.