



ICC Issues NOI Report on Extreme Weather Preparedness

Strength of Illinois Grid an advantage to handle severe weather events and lessen energy price spikes

Chicago, IL – The Illinois Commerce Commission is announcing the release of a Notice of Inquiry Report on Extreme Weather Preparedness. The NOI was initiated on April 15, 2021 amid the backdrop of an extreme weather storm in the U.S. South Central Region that resulted in reduced energy supply, increased energy demand and higher energy prices. Through the NOI, the Commission sought information to ensure all reasonable efforts are employed in Illinois to prevent widespread outages and dramatic spikes in energy prices during extreme weather events. The full report for 21-NOI-01 as well as all information submitted by the parties are available for review under the heading “NOI schedule and submissions” on the Commission’s website at [21-NOI-01 \(illinois.gov\)](https://www.illinois.gov/21-NOI-01).

“With climate change we are experiencing more extreme weather occurrences. As regulators, we need to be confident that our utilities and energy sector are prepared and ready to handle extreme weather emergencies with minimal impact on our residents,” said ICC Chairman Carrie Zalewski.

“It is not a matter of “if” a weather crisis occurs, it is a matter of when. In the case of severe weather, customers need assurance that everything possible is being done to keep the lights and heat on, and outages will be brief as possible. It is essential that customers are informed of the steps being taken to mitigate the impacts of severe weather, specifically how extreme spikes in energy costs will be prevented,” said ICC Commissioner D. Ethan Kimbrel.

Through the NOI, utility service providers and operators were asked several questions related to the preparations undertaken for continued operations during an extreme weather event to ensure adequate service, the prevention of service interruptions, and the reestablishment of service within a reasonable period of time. Questions were asked about coordination and planning efforts between the various utilities and RTOs to improve reliability and resiliency of the distribution systems during an extreme weather event; and how they communicate with customers, considering scenarios without the availability of Internet or phone service. Respondents were also asked for input on ways to mitigate the financial impact of extreme weather events on the utilities and ratepayers; and identify any possible changes in policies, rules or laws to ensure adequate, uninterrupted service at a reasonable cost during a weather crisis.

Many of the commenters acknowledged that Illinois has many advantages that mitigate the likelihood of an event like the one experienced in Texas in February 2021. The advantages include belonging to two regional transmission organizations (MISO and PJM) that interconnect to multiple states and other RTOs; having access to adequate supply from a diverse supply of sources and natural gas storage facilities; and having facilities that are weatherized and able to withstand Illinois’ harsh winter conditions.

The public utilities, RTOs, transmission companies and power generators that provided input into the NOI noted multiple policies and procedures in place before, during and after an extreme weather event intended to provide continuous service; quick restoration of all interrupted service, and adequate communication with all affected parties. They pointed to infrastructure improvements and emergency

generators (water utilities) and emergency radio or mobile systems that serve as back-up and highlighted partnerships between the utilities and government entities for emergency preparedness. Some respondents recommended the ICC continue to study changes to its rules and regulations that could facilitate mitigation of extreme weather impacts. Other suggestions include the offering of incentives for specific reliability or resiliency investments as Illinois transitions toward more renewable energy sources; adopting policies that encourage customers to change their power consumption to better match the supply to conserve energy and save money; installing gas safety measures such as excess flow valves and moving customer gas meters outside the home; developing policies that include more flexible payment arrangements for affected customers, waiver of deposit requirements and other fees; and the strengthening or expansion of existing rules to ensure customers enrolled with alternative retail electric suppliers or natural gas suppliers don't face huge price spikes during extreme weather events.

“The ICC appreciates everyone who participated in the NOI for their input and information. This report is intended to serve as a reference tool for the Commission and other policymakers. We encourage all those interested to read the report,” said Michael Merchant, ICC Executive Director.

Participants in the NOI included: Ameren Illinois Company; Aqua Illinois, Inc.; Capital Power Corporation on behalf of its subsidiary, Cardinal Point; Commonwealth Edison Company; Dynegy, a subsidiary of Vistra Corporation; Illinois American Water Company; Illinois Competitive Energy Association; ITC Midwest, LLC; Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc.; Mt. Carmel Public Utility Company; Natural Gas Pipeline of America; Northern Illinois Energy Users; Northern Illinois Gas Company; Office of the Illinois Attorney General; Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company and North Shore Gas Company; PJM Interconnection, LLC; Rockies Express Pipeline, LLC; Sustainable FERC Project, Citizens Utility Board, and Union of Concerned Scientists; TransCanada Pipeline USA Ltd on behalf of indirect subsidiaries ANR Pipeline Company and TransCanada Northern Border, Inc; and Urbint.

This report summarizes the comments received and is not intended to capture all details within the NOI responses.

In addition, the Commission on Thursday held its annual Winter Policy Session to hear from regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and the states large public utilities about their readiness to handle extreme winter weather events. The agenda and presentations can be found on the website by clicking [here](#).

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