

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:****Ellen Foley** (413) 535-4139**Janine Saunders** (413) 540-4408**Matt Kakley** (413) 535-3821

New England Expected to Have Sufficient Electricity Throughout Winter 2020-2021

Holyoke, Mass. — Dec. 8, 2020 — ISO New England Inc., operator of the region’s power grid, expects to have sufficient supplies to meet New England’s electric needs this winter under both normal and short durations of extreme temperatures for the region’s coldest months, spanning December 2020 through February 2021.

“Based on weather forecasts, fuel inventory assessments, and decreasing peak energy usage trends, the ISO expects the region will have the electricity it needs to meet consumer demand and maintain system reliability this winter,” said Peter Brandien, Vice President of System Operations & Market Administration for ISO New England. “However, conditions still exist such that if the region experiences an extended period of extreme cold weather, fuel supplies into the region could become constrained resulting in challenging system operations.”

Projected winter electricity needs

ISO New England anticipates demand for electricity will peak at 20,166 megawatts (MW) under normal weather conditions. This is 310 MW (1.5%) lower than the 2019-20 forecast, and reflects a long-term trend of declining peak winter energy use. During extremely cold temperatures, electricity demand is expected to peak at 20,806 MW, or 367 MW (1.7%) lower than the 2019-20 forecast.

Peak electricity usage, also called peak demand, is a measurement of the average, total electric power used by the regional power system, measured in megawatts, for a one-hour period. One megawatt of electricity can serve approximately 1,000 New England homes.

Weather conditions drive the need for electric power, and the upcoming winter weather outlook for New England reflects a 40% likelihood for warmer weather according to [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA).

Impact of COVID-19 on winter electricity needs

While the COVID-19 pandemic is not expected to impact power system reliability this winter, it will continue to bring uncertainty to electricity use. The ISO continuously evaluates usage trends, and adjusts electric demand forecast to account for changing dynamics. ISO New England will continue publishing [weekly updates](#) throughout the winter, looking at how the pandemic is affecting electricity use.

Planning for winter operations

ISO New England routinely monitors weather forecasts and fuel supplies as a part of its winter planning and has established procedures and communications protocols to alert stakeholders. Consecutive days of extremely cold weather can reduce fuel availability for generating power due to regional natural gas pipeline capacity constraints. Extreme winter weather and other unanticipated events can also impact logistics for delivering liquefied natural gas and fuel oil – both of which are important fuels for winter power production.

“The reliability of New England’s power system is our priority,” added Brandien. “We’ve established comprehensive procedures for maintaining situational awareness and communicating with key stakeholders to manage through these extended cold events.”

One procedure includes collecting fuel inventories from generators each week and providing a rolling three-week look ahead of anticipated power needs. Providing this three-week look ahead and signaling projected energy shortages to meet consumer demand and required levels of operating reserves, provides generators additional time to arrange for fuel deliveries. This better positions New England for reliable grid operations during extended cold-weather periods.

Other reliability practices include:

- Conducting annual generator readiness training
- Gathering feedback on expected fuel inventories and deliveries from fossil-fueled generators on at least a weekly basis
- Requesting daily readiness confirmation from natural gas-fired generators regarding their ability to meet day-ahead electricity obligations
- Coordinating regularly with the regional natural gas industry for awareness of real-time operating conditions

For more information about ISO New England's winter planning, visit iso-ne.com.

2020-2021 winter outlook by the numbers

- Winter peak forecast: 20,166 MW, with temperatures of about 5.2°F
- Extreme winter peak forecast: 20,806 MW, with temperatures at about -1.7°F
- Last winter's demand peaked at 19,033 MW on December 19, 2019
- The all-time winter peak demand is 22,818 MW, set on January 15, 2004, during a cold snap
- Resources with a Forward Capacity Market (FCM) capacity supply obligation to be available: 32,036 MW
- Total resources, including both FCM obligations and capability without FCM obligations: 35,117 MW (a generator's maximum possible output may be greater than its FCM obligation)
- Natural-gas-fired generating capacity at risk of not being able to get fuel when needed: more than 4,000 MW
- All-time peak demand: 28,130 MW, on August 2, 2006

ABOUT ISO NEW ENGLAND

Created in 1997, ISO New England is the independent, not-for-profit corporation responsible for the reliable operation of New England's electric power generation and transmission system, overseeing and ensuring the fair administration of the region's wholesale electricity markets, and managing comprehensive regional electric power planning.

