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Southwest Power Pool initiates controlled outages to maintain system reliability

Little Rock, Ark. — As extreme cold weather persists across the 14-state Southwest Power Pool (SPP) balancing authority area, electricity use has exceeded available generation. The grid operator declared an Energy Emergency Alert (EEA) Level 3 at 10:08 a.m. Central time on Feb. 15, when it was forced to begin relying on required reserve energy. After exhausting usage of available reserve energy, SPP has now subsequently directed its member utilities to implement controlled interruptions of service to prevent further, more widespread and uncontrolled outages.

“In our history as a grid operator, this is an unprecedented event and marks the first time SPP has ever had to call for controlled interruptions of service,” said SPP’s executive vice president and chief operating officer Lanny Nickell. “It’s a last resort that we understand puts a burden on our member utilities and the customers they serve, but it’s a step we’re consciously taking to prevent circumstances from getting worse, which could result in uncontrolled outages of even greater magnitude.”

SPP has instructed our members’ transmission system operators to reduce electricity demand by an amount needed to prevent further uncontrolled outages. Individual utilities will determine how best to curtail their use by the required amount based on their own emergency operating plans.

While SPP and our member companies work to restore the regional power grid to full capacity, consumers are urged to reduce electricity use, both at home and work.

“Our grid operators and member utilities are highly trained and prepared to respond to situations like this, and we’re working closely together to ensure the grid returns to a stable and safe operating condition,” said Nickell.

SPP declared a period of conservative operations for our entire balancing authority area at midnight central time on Feb. 9. The declaration of conservative operations signaled to SPP’s member company utility operators that they should operate conservatively to mitigate the risk of worsening conditions. On Feb. 14, we declared an EEA Level 1 effective at 5:00 am central time on Monday, Feb. 15. An EEA1 signals that SPP foresees or is experiencing conditions where all available resources are scheduled to meet firm load obligations and that we may be unable to sustain its required contingency reserves. Subsequently on Feb. 15 at 7:22 a.m. SPP declared an EEA Level 2, which required SPP to direct its member companies to issue public conservation appeals.

We thank the public for their cooperation and understanding during this power grid emergency. [Follow us on Twitter](#) or visit [SPP.org](#) for updates.

About SPP: Southwest Power Pool, Inc. is a regional transmission organization: a not-for-profit corporation mandated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure reliable supplies of power, adequate transmission infrastructure and competitive wholesale electricity prices on behalf of its members. SPP manages the electric grid across 17 central and western U.S. states and provides energy services on a contract basis to customers in both the Eastern and Western Interconnections. The company's headquarters are in Little Rock, Arkansas. Learn more at [SPP.org](#).

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