

DOE report recommends actions to prevent summer power outages

DOE's Power Outage Study Team final report on electricity outages and system disturbances during summer 1999 was released in mid-March. It contains findings and recommendations of appropriate Federal actions to help enhance electric reliability and avoid the outage problems that occurred last summer.

"Demand for electricity is soaring along with the use of computers, fax machines and other appliances in our homes, offices and factories. But the reliability of our electric grid is, at times, faltering, mainly because policy makers haven't kept pace with rapid changes in the electric utility industry," Energy Secretary Bill Richardson said. "This report can be a blueprint for how we will work to keep the lights on and air conditioners running in America's cities this summer."

The report states that competition in the electricity industry can save customers money and help with improved reliability. But, the institutions and practices that provided reliable electric service in the past will need to change along with ongoing economic reforms.

The report makes 12 recommendations, each including specific action items for Federal consideration:

- ◆ supporting the reporting and sharing of information on "best practices"
 - ◆ enhancing emergency preparedness activities for low-probability, high-consequence events on bulk-power systems
 - ◆ demonstrating Federal leadership by promoting best reliability practices at Federal utilities
 - ◆ conducting public-interest reliability-related research and development consistent with the needs of a restructuring electric industry
 - ◆ facilitating and empowering regional solutions to siting generation and transmission facilities
 - ◆ promoting public awareness of electric reliability issues
 - ◆ monitoring and assessing vulnerabilities to electric power system reliability
 - ◆ encouraging energy efficiency as a means for enhancing reliability
- "Federal electricity legislation is an essential component of the effort to help alleviate power outages this summer," Richardson said. "Congress must move ahead to make changes in the Federal statutory framework to provide the certainty that is needed to achieve reliable electric service in competitive wholesale and retail markets."
- Richardson formed the team, made up of power system experts from the Energy Department and its national research laboratories, as well as universities, following a series of power outages that crippled parts of New York City, Chicago and other communities last summer.
- The complete document of the U.S. Department of Energy's "Power Outage Study Team: Findings and Recommendations to Enhance Reliability from the Summer of 1999", is available on the Internet at: www.policy.energy.gov/electricity/postfinal.pdf.
- ◆ promoting market-based approaches to ensure reliable electric services
 - ◆ enabling customer participation in competitive electricity markets
 - ◆ removing barriers to distributed energy resources
 - ◆ supporting mandatory reliability standards for bulk-power systems

