



The Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

January 22, 2026

RE: Leveraging Backup Generation Facilities During Energy Emergencies

Dear Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities:

The United States is facing a national energy emergency. Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities play an essential role in addressing the consequences of this emergency.

As President Trump noted, generation capacity is “far too inadequate to meet our Nation’s needs.”¹ Resource inadequacy is especially problematic during prolonged winter cold snaps when additional capacity shortages can quickly cause reliability failures.² The consequences can be severe. For example, in 2021, Winter Storm Uri resulted in billions of dollars in damage and over 200 deaths.³ We cannot stand passively in the face of the immediate and pressing need for generation resources necessary to preserve lives, support the economy, and ensure national security.

Despite the years of bad policy that led us to this point, there is a solution to this problem. Across the country there are gigawatts of readily available backup generation that have remained largely untapped until now. This backup generation can and should be used to save American lives and avoid billions of dollars in economic devastation, as energy subtraction policies of the previous administration cause acute scarcity events.

To support this effort, I have directed the Department to prepare to issue orders, pursuant to my statutory authority under section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act, which will ensure that the tens of gigawatts of available backup generation, which would otherwise stand idle, is available during emergency conditions.

When Reliability Coordinators and/or Balancing Authorities notify us, even merely by phone call, that there is an expected emergency warranting the issuance of a 202(c) order, I will review the facts and, if appropriate, authorize the Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities to direct backup generation facilities to run as a last resort before declaring an Energy Emergency Alert (EEA) 3, thereby avoiding potential blackouts.⁴

¹ Executive Order No. 14156, 90 Fed. Reg. 8433 (Jan. 20, 2025) (Declaring a National Energy Emergency), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/declaring-a-national-energy-emergency/>.

² *Winter Storm Elliott Report: Inquiry into Bulk-Power System Operations During December 2022*, FERC, NERC, and Regional Entity Staff Report, at 11 (October 2023), <https://www.ferc.gov/media/winter-storm-elliott-report-inquiry-bulk-power-system-operations-during-december-2022>.

³ *The February 2021 Cold Weather Outages in Texas and the South Central United States*, FERC, NERC, and Regional Entity Staff Report, at 234 (November 2021), <https://www.ferc.gov/media/february-2021-cold-weather-outages-texas-and-south-central-united-states-ferc-nerc-and>. See *id.* at 189 (“Millions went without heat, lights, refrigeration, and water for days during the Event. Hundreds died from hypothermia or trying to keep warm, in their homes, in their beds.”).

⁴ This ensures that backup generation facilities will only be used after all available generation resources and all load management procedures (e.g., demand response resources) are exhausted. See <https://www.nerc.com/global/assets/standards/reliability-standards/eop/eop-011-4.pdf>.



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There are certain facilities whose operations are of such criticality that it would be inappropriate to require their backup generation to run early in an emergency (like military installations and hospitals). I expect the Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities to work closely with the facilities within their service territories to deliberately prioritize the dispatch order of backup generation to achieve the greatest benefit to the bulk power system while balancing mission-essential functions.

To respond to the nation's unprecedented electricity demand growth, the Department of Energy stands ready to work with the Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities to ensure needed generation capacity is developed and to protect lives, avoid economic loss, and ensure affordability for all Americans. In order to ensure that the backup generation is available should it be required, I have directed my staff to coordinate with the Reliability Coordinators and Balancing Authorities ahead of this weekend's winter storm.

The Department is ready to address any questions you may have on how to best implement a 202(c) order, should I determine an emergency exists in your service territory.

Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy