

## Politicians debate efforts to improve the nation's electrical grid

January 23, 2018

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on January 23 that underscored concerns surrounding the reliability and resiliency of the electrical power system, particularly under certain weather conditions, such as the deep freeze or bomb cyclone that the U.S. experienced in the first week of January this year. FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre asserted that overall the nation's grid performed relatively well during the recent cold weather event and that, although coal is a key contributor of the nation's fuel mix, there still would not have been any widespread outages in the absence of coal. After weather-related operational problems forced the shutdown of the Pilgrim Nuclear Plant in Massachusetts on January 5, oil-fired generators came online to offset the 680 megawatt electrical deficit. ISO New England CEO Gordon van Welie stated that natural gas price spikes due to increased demand and supply limitations made oil more economically viable during these severe weather events. He also indicated that easing the restrictions on natural gas pipeline permits would help develop the nation's energy infrastructure and insulate the grid from similar spikes in demand.

*Sources: National Geographic; Reuters; U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*

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