Twitter Thread by Austin Energy

Austin Energy
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Press conference with city/county officials + Austin Energy GM Jackie Sargent. WATCH:

Austin Energy GM Jackie Sargent: For many of our customers here and across the state, they have been dealing with this. I'm so sorry our customers are experiencing these horrible conditions. I want you to know we're doing everything we can to restore power.

We are meeting the customers' needs as best as we can. We're continuing to respond to ERCOT's need for the electric grid - they're still operating at low reserve margins. If you have power, still help conserve.

We are now dealing with an ice storm event. It's impeding operations of some of our equipment. This ice storm is impacting our customers, some who had power and now don't.

I do have a bit of good news. Even though ERCOT’s reserves are low, they have given Austin Energy permission to restore some customers. We’ve restored 16 circuits across our service We are prioritizing customers who have been without power the longest.

However, this power may not stay on the whole time. If ERCOT resources remain available, once those circuits stabilize and the chances of system overload have decreased, we hope to begin outage rotations. The more load we are authorized to add back.

We're hearing some concerns, some speculation about hospitals. All tier 1 critical loads are currently energized. No plans to add them to rotating outages. However, they are vulnerable to ice storms and other weather events. Encourage backup generation.

Our crews have been working 24/7 and in these elements. Some of our crews are reporting incidents of harassment, threatening them and even throwing things at them. I know people are extremely frustrated. But please, I bet of you, do not approach AE crews.

Sargent: They are essential workers responding to emergencies and they are there to help you.

Austin Water Greg Meszaros: customers are experiencing significant lower pressure or outright water outages. As our system is being drained down and can't meet demand.

Meszaros: Asking customers to not drip their faucets. If you have a burst pipe, please isolate on your property or call it in. If you see a main break in a street, please call that in.

City Manager Spencer Cronk: We know this is frustrating. I am sorry this is happening. Shelters are available at Palmer Events Center and Del Valle High School.

Cronk: We need to save water. We need to save energy. We need to save gas.

Mayor Steve Adler: I see understand how many people are frustrated, confused and angry. To be in a situation where we have 5 million people without power in Texas - it's a huge failure in the grid. We weren't ready for a sustained 18 below condition.

Adler: We need to conserve water and that's the immediate priority.

Q: Are rotating outages happening around the city?
Sargent: Currently, we not stable enough to have rotating outages. We are seeing some outages due to the ice storm. We are working on all of that at this time.

Q: Why is PEC, other co
Sargent: As you look at the load that is served by AE across the community, we have a lot of medical facilities, govt facilities, we have other loads that are critical in nature due to being the capital of Texas.

So if you look at the # of circuits available, assume that we have 200 circuits available, if 100 are designated as critical load, they are not available for us to shed to respond to an ERCOT directive. So we only have the other 100 left. The amount of critical load, compared to

other providers. That's why we maxed out. There was nobody else we could get to implement and turn on the other circuits. We had this weather event. It froze up equipment - so it doesn't operate until manual intervention.

Until we can have enough headroom, we won't be able to enact rotating outages.

Q: What can customers expect from their upcoming bill?
Sargent: We do realize there are going to be impacts and we're going to be mindful of that - maintain balance of affordability and reliability.

Q: Why can't outages be more granular?
Sargent: The way the system was setup, was to cycle through circuits and look at amount of load instead of individual consumer load. We do have remote disconnect meters, but they're not part of this application because we need to do it in

blocks of power. To go through it individually one by one would be overwhelming. Once a circuit is off and there is no power to that meter, you no longer have that remote operating capability.

Q: Why is SW Austin area under boil water notice?
Meszaros: There was a large main break in that area, maybe multiple ones. We're seeing main breaks and pipes bursting by the tens of thousands. Our entire system is under stress.
Adler: As it is in other cities as well.