

# Summer Electricity Shortage Possible

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Demand for power may outstrip supplies in Southern California if the temperature this summer is higher than usual, the state's electric grid operator said in its latest summer power forecast.

The Southland will have inadequate power resources if the heat reaches a level that occurs about 10% of the time, the California Independent System Operator said in a report posted Monday on its website.

California's Energy Commission made a similar forecast Feb. 22.

Supplies may be stretched because the economy is growing faster in the Southland than in the rest of the state and transmission bottlenecks hinder the ability to import power from other areas.

A drought in the Pacific Northwest has reduced water supplies behind hydroelectric dams by about 30%, which might have an effect on California's ability to quickly import electricity to satisfy peak demand on hot afternoons in August or September.

"Things are probably under control, but the big question is what happens if we get unexpected things such as unseasonably hot weather or a transmission wire that goes down," said Jan Smutny-Jones, executive director of the Independent Energy Producers Assn. in Sacramento.

Southern California, which would have a power shortfall of as much as 1,725 megawatts under the warmer-than-normal scenario, also would have "critically thin operating margins" in weather conditions that have a 50% probability, the report said.

One megawatt can power about 800 typical U.S. homes, according to the Energy Department.

California last suffered blackouts across the state in 2001 because of energy shortages.

"We don't think rotating outages will be necessary this summer, but we can't absolutely predict that they won't be," said Gregg Fishman, a spokesman for the grid operator.

Some 6,230 megawatts of generating capacity have been added in Northern California compared with 2,440 in Southern California over the last five years, the electric grid operator's report said.