

Rolling Blackouts in California

Rolling blackouts in California have been making headlines and sparking questions across the country, particularly in regions such as the Midwest that are seeing rapid renewable energy growth. Great River Energy and many of our member-owners are receiving the same question: “Could this happen here?”

There is a fundamental difference between California and Minnesota that makes our situations quite different: California’s dependence on solar energy. Rolling blackouts are occurring shortly after sundown when solar resources stop generating while temperatures remain high and air conditioner use continues.

Solar energy makes up a very small percentage of the generating resources in MISO, so the region does not experience sharp drop-offs in energy production associated with widespread reliance on solar generating resources.

Great River Energy has been a part of the MISO electricity market since 2005. As a member of MISO, we must have sufficient generating capacity to meet our members’ peak load plus reserves. Great River Energy’s generating capacity is, and will always be, more than sufficient to provide reliability services and meet MISO requirements.

We have a fleet of modern natural gas plants in Minnesota that provide all-hours reliability. Most of these plants have on-site backup fuels. We have also built new transmission across the region to ensure energy can be delivered to our members. And, in partnership with member-owner cooperatives, we have developed one of the country’s most robust demand response programs which allows us to effectively reduce electric loads during extreme conditions.

As electricity providers, we expect these types of questions from our members. It shows us how much they value reliable electric service. Great River Energy has the resources we need to ensure electricity is there for you and your members.