

## **Blackouts coming to NY soon?**

### **Study: As 'peaker plants' go offline in NYC, parts of state could go dark during heat**

New York City could face power outages during the summer of 2025, when fossil fuel-fired plants that have been trusted workhorses during heat waves are forced to shut down to serve the state's green energy goals.

- The grim assessment comes from the New York Independent System Operator, the nonprofit that oversees the state's energy grid, which warns of outages that could lead to brownouts or worse during extreme heat when air conditioners run around the clock.
- Specifically, the city could face an energy gap of nearly 450 megawatts — one megawatt powers 1,000 homes — on a day of peak energy demand, a gap that would grow during heat waves of 98 degrees or more, the study notes.

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**Thomas C. Zambito**

New York State Team | USA TODAY NETWORK

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While the NYISO has highlighted these concerns in reports dating back to 2021, it's the first time it painted such a nightmare scenario for the city's energy's future.

The NYISO report links potential outages to plans to shutter so-called "peaker plants," a key piece of New York's goal for a carbon-free grid that relies on renewable sources of power — solar, wind and hydro — for the bulk of the state's energy needs.

### **Peaker plants face shutdown, despite coming power demand**

In 2019, the state Department of Environmental Conservation created the "Peaker Rule," which sets limits on emissions of nitrogen oxides, effectively putting peaker plants that generate power during periods of heavy demand out of business. After decades of operation, 37 peaker plants that could not upgrade their pollution controls have plans to retire, according to the state officials. "With the additional peakers unavailable, the bulk power transmission system will not be able to securely and reliably serve the forecasted demand in New York City," the report says.

Critics of the state's renewable energy transition, among them the owners of fossil fuel plants, used the NYISO's findings to suggest the state needs to rethink its strategy.

They say the renewable build-out is moving too slowly to justify the shutdown of fossil fuel-fired plants, particularly in New York City.

"The pace of play is not keeping up with pace of promises, and this report makes that clear," said Gavin Donohue, who heads the Independent Power Producers of New York, a trade group that represents fossil fuel plants and other energy producers. "There have been repeated cautions from the NYISO regarding grid reliability, and this report highlights the reality that generator retirement cannot outpace the addition of new generation with the attributes needed by the NYISO to maintain reliability."

### **Environmental groups want to close plants over health concerns**

The NYISO report says the peaker shutdowns are not the only factor that could spur outages. Increased demand from the electrification of vehicles and buildings is also placing strains on the grid. In the coming months, NYISO will identify solutions.

Among them will be keeping some of the peaker plants operating, a decision likely to be challenged by environmental advocates. Several groups have been pushing the state to shut down peakers located in densely populated communities of color in the Bronx and Queens dubbed "Asthma Alley" for high rates of respiratory illness.

The report also highlights potential reliability issues in western and central New York that will be caused by the addition of several large manufacturing plants, including Micron, which plans to spend \$100 billion on a semiconductor plant near Syracuse.

"This new STAR report reflects the extraordinary challenges of the grid in transition," said Zach Smith, NYISO's vice president of system and resource planning. "The reliability of the electric system is essential to the health and safety for all New Yorkers as well as the state's economy."

### **Are there any solutions?**

The report says the anticipated energy gap could be closed by a plan to deliver hydroelectric power from Canada along 339 miles of cable, most of those in the Hudson River. The \$6 billion Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) is scheduled to begin delivering power to New York City by the spring of 2026. "Without the CHPE project in service or other offsetting changes or solutions, the reliability margins continue to be deficient for the ten-year planning horizon," the report notes.

In a statement, the Hochul administration expressed confidence that the state can achieve its climate goals while guarding against outages.

"To be clear: the reliability of our grid is not in question," the statement said. "We are committed to ensuring New Yorkers have a reliable and affordable power supply... Gov. Hochul remains fully committed to rapidly decreasing emissions and setting an example for how clean energy and reliability can go hand-in-hand."

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