

Montana Public Service Commission



James Brown, President
Jennifer Fielder, Vice President
Tony O'Donnell, Commissioner
Randall Pinocci, Commissioner
Dr. Annie Bukacek, Commissioner

January 30, 2024

Mr. Charles Lane
Director of Regulatory Affairs
NorthWestern Energy
208 North Montana Avenue, Suite 200
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Docket No. 2022.09.087 – Request for information regarding system operations during recent severe weather conditions.

Dear Mr. Lane:

The Public Service Commission (“Commission”) initiated Docket No. 2022.09.087 in September 2022 to investigate resource adequacy and risks to the electrical supply of the state of Montana. In its notice initiating the investigation, the Commission requested input from interested stakeholders and the public on whether typical approaches to evaluating resource adequacy were sufficient to ensure the Western Region can reliably serve customer demand. The Commission indicated it would consider next steps after further reviewing the issues and public comments.

On January 30, 2024, the Commission determined that the recent severe winter weather event that affected much of the Pacific Northwest, and beyond, provides an opportunity for the Commission to further examine resource adequacy and associated risks to Montana customers. Accordingly, the Commission requests that NorthWestern provide the following information for the period January 8 – 18, 2024.

- (1) Total balancing area load on an hourly basis.
- (2) Hourly imports and exports on each transmission path that interconnects NorthWestern’s balancing area with the Western Interconnection.
- (3) Total retail load obligation of NorthWestern’s supply function on an hourly basis.
- (4) Total energy delivered on an hourly basis from each of the following resources/resource categories used to supply the retail load obligation of NorthWestern’s supply function:
 - a. Hydroelectric facilities
 - b. Wind facilities
 - c. Solar facilities
 - d. Basin Creek

- e. Dave Gates Generating Station
 - f. Colstrip
 - g. Thermal Qualifying Facilities
 - h. Contracted capacity
 - i. Day-ahead and hour-ahead energy purchases
 - j. Other (please describe)
- (5) Hourly variable expenses incurred by the supply function for each of the supply sources listed in (3)
- (6) Hourly revenue from energy sales by the supply function.
- (7) Hourly system-representative temperatures (i.e., single temperature figures that reflect a range of load center temperatures across the balancing area).
- (8) Aggregate energy from all sources that have not received capacity accreditation pursuant to the Western Resource Adequacy Program on an hourly basis.
- (9) The difference, in average megawatts, between the scheduled load and delivered energy for retail choice customers, on an aggregate, hourly basis.

Please organize the information requested above in a single Microsoft Excel worksheet with data for each item listed in columns.

In addition to the information requested above, please discuss whether the Western Power Pool initiated any sharing events pursuant to the Western Resource Adequacy Program, whether NorthWestern received or provided capacity or energy as a result, and NorthWestern's assessment of liquidity in the wholesale energy market during this period and the basis for that assessment.

Finally, NorthWestern informed Commission staff that a portion of the Colstrip facility was out of service for maintenance during this timeframe and just prior to when temperatures dropped significantly. Please explain what maintenance was performed, when the need for the maintenance was determined and scheduled, NorthWestern's involvement in the planning and decision-making regarding the timing of the maintenance, and whether it is normal practice to schedule maintenance of the facility in peak load months.

Please provide this information by February 13, 2024.

Sincerely,

/s/James Brown
JAMES BROWN, President

/s/Jennifer Fielder
JENNIFER FIELDER, Vice President

/s/Tony O'Donnell
TONY O'DONNELL, Commissioner

/s/Randy Pinocci
RANDY PINOCCI, Commissioner

/s/Dr. Annie Bukacek
DR. ANNIE BUKACEK, Commissioner