

Travis County Emergency Energy Conservation Policy

Purpose

Travis County is a significant user of electricity in Austin. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) monitors the availability of electrical capacity on the state-wide grid and in cases of extremely high load demand or loss of generation capability, may declare an energy emergency and request users to reduce consumption. Effective response to the notifications is critical to ensure that the grid remains stable and to avoid power outages and/or rolling blackouts.

Response Procedures

Travis County will respond to any ERCOT emergency notifications (Power Watch, Power Warning or Power Emergency) by immediately taking appropriate steps to reduce energy consumption until the crisis is averted. Upon notification of an energy emergency alert, Travis County will take the following steps:

1. The alert notification will be sent out via County email to all personnel.
2. County staff will immediately turn off any unnecessary electrical loads, such as unneeded lighting, televisions, computers, printers, monitors, space heaters or cooking devices.
3. County staff will be reminded to shut down printers, computers, monitors, copiers and lights when departing the work area.
4. County staff should also shut window blinds or drapes to limit heating from sunlight entering the office during energy alerts.
5. Facilities Management Department will implement energy conservation measures for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to reduce load including:
 - a. Adjust building cooling (summer) by raising the cooling set point by 2 degrees from the standard comfort range of 72 to 75 degrees up to 74 to 77 degrees. Exceptions will be considered for medical facilities and courts in session.
 - b. If event occurs during heating season, lower the heating set point by 2 degrees from the standard 70 to 72 degrees down to 68 to 70 degrees.
 - c. On buildings where feasible, Facilities Management Department will ensure that the HVAC systems are set up for unoccupied mode operations from 9:00 PM to 4:00 AM on weekdays and for the entire weekend. In unoccupied mode, HVAC systems will cut back to limit energy consumption. Buildings with 24 hour operations will not be included.

- d. Austin Energy has the capability to automatically and remotely cycle off smaller HVAC units as needed in many of the County facilities. This load shedding occurs without noticeable impact on the building occupants. Units are cycled off and on throughout the City as needed to reduce loads, but each unit is cycled off for a short time without impact on building temperatures.
6. Facilities Management Department staff will monitor lights and computers in buildings after business hours and ensure all unneeded lighting is turned off. Departments that leave computers and monitors on after hours will be reminded to turn off all devices at the end of the work day.

Upon notification from Austin Energy, ERCOT or local media that the crisis has passed, the information will be relayed to County staff via email.