

3.15 - Power Failure Hazard Profile

Widespread power outages have been one of the most prominent impacts of the most recent major disasters New York State has suffered. Typically a Power Outage is a cascading effect of a larger Natural Hazard. Contents of this section resulted from research and outreach including but not limited to the following sources:

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), www.fema.gov
- The NYS Public Service Commission, (<http://www.dps.state.ny.us/>)
- The New York State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) <http://www.semo.state.ny.us/>

The following chart provides the definition of a power failure:

Term	Definition
Power Failure	Any interruption or loss of electrical service due to disruption of power transmission caused by accident, sabotage, natural hazards or equipment failure. A significant power failure is defined as any incident of a long duration which would require the involvement of the local and/or state emergency management organizations to coordinate provision of food, water, heating, shelter, etc...

Power failure, as defined in this section of the Plan, has occurred on numerous occasions in various locations throughout the State. Since a power failure may be caused by the disruption of power transmission due to an accident, sabotage, natural hazards or equipment failure, the probability of failure occurrences persist. This type of incident, depending on severity, could pose significant health and safety risks and would normally require the involvement of the local emergency management organization to coordinate provisions of food, shelter, water, heating, etc.

Between August 14th and 16th of 2003 a mass power outage swept across the Northeast United States. New York was severely affected by this power outage. On August 23, 2003 FEMA declared an Emergency Declaration for the State of New York allotting a total of five million dollars for Public Assistance (Category B) relief. Category B assistance is defined by FEMA as, measures taken before, during, and immediately after a disaster to save lives, protect public health and safety, and protect improved public and private property. The entire State of New York was declared to be affected adversely by this declared emergency. Many of the jurisdictions as well as power companies have realized vulnerabilities as well as high priority risks. The power companies and counties have extensive disaster preparedness plans in place, ready to go, in the event of a power failure.

Table 3-70

Power Failure Emergency Declaration		
Declaration #	Date	Declared Area
3186	8/23/2003	All Counties Within NYS

Source: FEMA

New York State Efforts

The need to prevent power failure and loss has arisen as a major issue. Following each event that affects utility service, the State Department of Public Service (DPS), the staff arm of the Public Service Commission (PSC), conducts a detailed review of utility restoration efforts. After power failure events the PSC presents reports pertaining to that specific event. These reports give a detailed analysis of that event, as well as, a list of mitigation efforts that a particular power company should take. A copy of these reports can be found on the Public Service Commission website. (<http://www.dps.state.ny.us/>)

The Department of Public Service rules and regulations (16 NYCRR Part 105) lays out the criterion for electric utility emergency plans (these rules and regulations are available on the DPS website, (<http://www.dps.state.ny.us/>)). Utility emergency plans are updated annually and include the requirement for utilities to conduct emergency/storm drills. Storm drills are defined as “a training exercise held by an electric utility to test the adequacy and effectiveness of its regularly assigned personnel and personnel performing job functions outside of their normal areas of responsibility in implementing the utility’s service restoration procedures in the wake of a storm classified at the highest or next highest level of severity by the utility...”. These drills must involve contacts with outside agencies, local governments, and others who would normally be included in service restoration responses.

New York State Energy Emergency Plan

New York State does have an emergency plan in place known as the *New York State Energy Emergency Plan (2006): An Integrated Resource Plan Specifying Actions to be Taken in the Event of an Energy or Fuel Supply Emergency*. This plan is prepared by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and covers the events of a Petroleum Emergency, Coal Emergency, Electrical Emergency, and a Natural Gas Emergency. The objectives of this plan are to:

- Protect Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
- Minimize economic disruption
- Direct scarce energy supplies in an equitable manner among competing essential purposes

This plan incorporates many different organizations and departments including but not limited to multiple NYS Departments, NYC Office of Emergency Management, Federal and State Liaisons, NYSERDA, City and County Coordinators, County Emergency Managers, and Local Governments. In all, the preparation and response that this plan details allows New York State as a whole to be better prepared in the event of an Energy Emergency.