



## Groton Electric Light

23 Station Avenue  
Groton, MA 01450

tel: 978-448-1150  
fax: 978-448-1159



Dear GELD customer:

It is with sincere regret that I must share that my concerns have gone beyond the rapid increases in utility costs, and now extend to the reliability of the electric grid. It is extremely critical for all of us to **BE PREPARED** this winter.

For the last few years, the reliability of the electric grid has been deteriorating, especially in the winter in New England. This year is even worse. If there is an extended cold snap, there is a high probability of rolling blackouts. If we experience rolling blackouts, there will be times when the transmission lines to our substation will NOT be energized. That means there is nothing that GELD will be able to do to provide electricity other than petition the regional transmission owners for the shortest possible duration without electricity.

The following paragraph explains some of the reasons this is happening. The paragraph following that offers my recommendations.

This problem has been years in the making as baseload generation has been shut down in New England. The coal plants were shut down, then the oil plants, then many of the nuclear plants. In the recent past, we had fuel diversity in our electric generation which is not available today. Last January, there were many days where 25% of the electricity produced in New England came from diesel fuel. There are multiple plants in New England that run on dual fuels. They run on natural gas when it is available, but they can switch to diesel fuel when natural gas is not available. For the full month of January 2022, 11% of the electricity produced in New England came from diesel fuel. At the present time, diesel fuel storage on the entire eastern seaboard is at historical lows and the government is creating a situation where refining in America is becoming so costly that the refiners are steadily closing. In the last year, America has lost over one million barrels per day of refining capacity. That cannot be restored quickly and will have to be made up using overseas suppliers.

I have a few recommendations for the ratepayers of Groton during these challenging times. First, fill up your tanks soon; if it is cold in January, it will be more challenging and more expensive to get both heating oil and propane. Fill up your five-gallon fuel containers – they will be needed for generators if there are rolling blackouts. If you have a generator, test it to make sure it runs. You still have some time to have it serviced if it is not working properly. If you have a wood burning or pellet stove, make sure you have at least a one-week supply of wood/pellets.

GELD will do everything we can to keep our service as reliable and secure as possible, despite any challenges that come our way.

*Please be prepared* – stay safe and warm this winter.

Sincerely,

Kevin P. Kelly  
General Manager

## Questions and Answers:

**Q.** The letter doesn't include details about the rolling blackouts. Can you help us understand the likelihood and severity of the blackouts?

**A.** Excellent question. For the last six months, I have been trying, to no avail, to get ISO-NE to answer that. So, I'll give you my best guess. Currently, New England is in acceptable shape regarding electricity, but the real challenge will be any extended periods of time where the temperature drops below 10 degrees. The critical issue is the duration of the cold snap, every day longer the situation gets worse and worse. My expectation is that in a long cold snap they would keep the blackouts as short as possible to avoid freezing pipes, probably on the order of three hours rotating throughout New England until the temperature moderates.

**Q.** How long would a blackout last?

**A.** It is expected that rolling blackouts would NOT exceed four hours in duration, probably on the order of three hours at a time.

**Q.** Would there be notice?

**A.** In theory, yes, there would be adequate notice. First there should be a call for all of New England to engage in voluntary load reduction (see definition below). Then there would probably be a call to shut down the manufacturing that is left in New England. Then there would be other steps that GELD would administer, before blackouts would occur.

**Q.** What is Voluntary Load Reduction or conservation?

**A.** Voluntary Load Reduction would be a call, probably via major media outlets asking customers to avoid things such as laundry, running the dishwasher, charging electric vehicles, reducing heat, turning off humidifiers, turning off holiday lights etc. during incident, then return to normal activities once incident has passed.

**Q.** Will lowering electric use today help?

**A.** Short answer is no. It is still beneficial for us economically to move as much of your use as possible out of the peak evening hours (4pm-8pm). The problem with this winter is electric generation during an extended cold snap.

**Q.** Where can I get information regarding generators?

**A.** You can start with our generator flyer at:

<http://www.grotonelectric.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Generator-Brochure.pdf>

**Q.** Where can I get more information about the energy situation in New England?

**A.** Some great articles:

[https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2022/10/31/eversource-biden-emergency-action-new-england-natural-gas/?p1=hp\\_primary](https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2022/10/31/eversource-biden-emergency-action-new-england-natural-gas/?p1=hp_primary)

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-england-risks-winter-blackouts-as-gas-supplies-tighten-11665999002>

Basic outage information can be found at:

<http://www.grotonelectric.org/information/outages/google-maps/>