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## **IUB working with utilities on customer impact to electric, natural gas service due to severe cold**

(Des Moines) — Due to the ongoing severe winter weather, the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) is coordinating with all Iowa utilities to ensure customers have electric and natural gas service. The Midwest's extreme cold, combined with other weather events, especially in the Southern states, where wind turbines and gas wells are freezing and becoming non-operational, has led to an issue where electric generation across large areas of the county was severely reduced. Natural gas and electric demand remains extremely high in several states and capacity for both remains problematic due to supply and transmission issues.

Due to the demand outpacing available supply in certain areas, some utilities are being instructed by their regional transmission operator (RTO) to curtail their electric load.

With the decrease in electric generation coupled with an increased demand for electricity, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), one of the RTO's to which Iowa utilities are members, encountered demand that exceeded its capacity to provide to its members. As a result, SPP declared a series of Energy Emergency Alerts. Late Monday and early today, SPP escalated these alerts to the highest level and instructed some of its members to reduce electricity demand by an amount needed to prevent further and uncontrolled power interruptions.

Iowa's largest utilities (MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy, and Black Hills Energy) informed the IUB on Tuesday that their customers have not been affected by the blackouts and those utilities project sufficient supplies to meet the needs of their natural gas customers and ongoing electric and natural gas customer demand.

Alliant Energy initiated a gas interruption event (Saturday, Feb. 13 through Tuesday, Feb. 16) for customers who had voluntarily signed up for the interruptible rate and provided advanced notice to those customers seeking to limit the interruption. Black Hills Energy initiated a gas interruption event for its large- and small-volume customers. MidAmerican Energy coordinated with its largest customers to ensure uninterrupted gas service for residential customers and communicated with customers asking them to reduce their usage.

The impact to increased costs is currently unknown, but is anticipated to be substantial. IUB Board Chair Geri Huser stated at Tuesday's regular monthly meeting that the IUB is aware of rising costs and will be meeting with the large utilities to discuss the situation before the utilities file a request to recover the cost from ratepayers.

Natural gas markets reopened on Tuesday morning after the Presidents' Day federal holiday. The cold weather is forecasted to continue across the central United States.

If customers are experiencing issues with their natural gas or electric service they are encouraged to contact their local utility company.

**What customers can do to conserve energy and remain safe**

Customers should be sure that vents, meters and air intakes for natural gas appliances are clear of snow and ice. Additional cold weather tips include:

- Lowering the thermostat while sleeping or away from home. Thermostat temperatures should never be reduced to a setting that might impact the health of anyone in the home or cause pipes to freeze
- Inspect, clean and change furnace filters following manufacturers' recommendations
- When possible, weatherize exterior doors and windows
- Never use portable combustion generators indoors due to potential carbon monoxide poisoning
- Never use stoves, ovens, grills or gas or kerosene heaters indoors for space heating
- Ensure there is adequate venting when using a fireplace or wood-burning stove
- Never leave space heaters or open flames from fireplaces unattended
- Make sure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are connected and functioning properly

*The Iowa Utilities Board regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans.*

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