

# ***PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS***

## **OPEN MEETING AGENDA WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021, 5:00 P.M. Commissioners' Hearing Room 7th Floor, William B. Travis Building**

**The public may participate in this open meeting remotely by audio conference through a toll-free number: (877) 226-9790 using the access code 7849516#.**

Project No. 51812 – Issues Related to the State of Disaster for the February 2021 Winter Weather Event

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In accordance with section 551.045 of the Texas Government Code, the Public Utility Commission of Texas is giving notice that it will convene a meeting to address an emergency and urgent public necessity. The Polar Vortex unleashed a polar airmass that has settled on much of the Nation and has brought historically low temperatures to Texas. This frigid airmass, in combination with other weather systems, has produced historically low temperatures, ice storms, and record snow falls. Governor Greg Abbott on February 12, 2021 certified that this severe winter weather poses an imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury, and loss of life due to prolonged freezing temperature, heavy snow, and freezing rain statewide. To address this threat, the Governor Abbott declared a state of disaster in all 254 counties of Texas and suspended upon his approval regulatory matters that would hinder or delay necessary action to cope with this disaster. These severe weather events and other events have affected many things, including the wholesale price of electricity and the price of natural gas, a major fuel for electric generation. The effect has been curtailments of the electric-generation fleets committed to the electricity market in the region of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT). The lack of sufficient generation resources caused ERCOT to issue an Emergency Energy Alert 3, which resulting in the shedding of customer load. The absence of these generation units has resulted in millions of citizens of Texas losing electricity at a time when this energy is most needed to protect life and property. Some customers have been curtailed for multiple days as there has been no rotation of outages among customers. Short outages of electricity during such severe weather can be tolerable but days-long outages raise issues of health and safety of the highest order. It is expected that these conditions will remain in place for a period of time given the duration of this weather event and the state of the ERCOT market.

The convening of this meeting is necessary to allow the Commission to address the imminent threat to public health and safety due to this loss of electricity for millions of citizens and the continuing outages borne by some customers over several days in the ERCOT region. The Commission must determine whether it should exercise its authority under section 39.151 of the Public Utility Regulatory act to ensure that, when customer loads must be shed to protect the ERCOT system, the burden borne by customers is properly balanced with the needs of electric system and to ensure that the citizens of Texas have access to electricity to the greatest extent possible to meet their needs during this weather event. Without such decisions, the continuing lack of electricity for some of the citizens of Texas could result in loss of life or damage to property that otherwise could be prevented.

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Due to the emergency conditions resulting from this disaster declared by the Governor, these matters cannot wait for the Commission's next regularly scheduled open meeting on February 25, 2021. Accordingly, the Commission must meet promptly by telephone conference call to discuss and possibly take action, including the issuance of orders, to establish clear requirements regarding the generation and pricing of electricity to ensure sufficient generation resources to meet the needs of the people ERCOT.

As required by a previous disaster declaration and suspension of open meeting laws by Governor Abbott, The Commission will meet by telephone conference call. The number by which members of the public may make public comments at this meeting will be posted on the Commission's website located at [www.puc.texas.gov](http://www.puc.texas.gov).