



Save these Dates!

*** Final Line Crew Training for 2026 ***
Safety for Line Workers
October 22 & 23 – Grove City
October 26 & 27 – Chambersburg
October 28 & 29 – Lansdale

Spring Superintendents Meeting – April 8 & 9, 2027
Nittany Lion Inn, State College

PMEA Reception @ PSAB Annual Conference (*tentative)
Hershey Lodge, Hershey

PMEA 2027 Annual Conference – September 8 – 10, 2027
Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

PMEA Business Workshop
– September 8, 2027 @ Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

2027 Training for Line Crews
****Classes and dates to be announced soon****

Coming Soon: Special Issue – Recap of Annual Conference

Watch your inboxes for a special edition of the Live Wire! We will share photos and a review of the conference sessions.



PUC Study Warns Rapid Data Center Growth Could Pose Serious Risks to Electric Reliability

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) today released an independent analysis warning that rapidly growing electricity demand – driven largely by data center development – could create serious reliability risks across Pennsylvania and the broader region unless electricity supply keeps pace with that growth.

[The analysis](#), conducted by Synapse Energy Economics, a nationally recognized energy consulting firm, examined whether sufficient electric resources will be available to reliably serve customers as demand grows and existing generation retires.

The study found that based on current load forecast from regional power grid operator PJM and assuming no additional policy actions, the regional grid fails to meet PJM's reliability planning standard from 2027 through 2030.

By 2030, the modeled reliability risk is nearly six times worse than PJM's planning standard.



“Pennsylvania is at an energy crossroads,” said PUC Chairman Steve DeFrank. “Data center development brings significant opportunities, but that growth cannot come at the expense of the families and businesses that already depend on reliable and affordable electric service. This analysis sends a clear warning: electricity demand and supply are moving out of balance, and the status quo is not sustainable. We need urgent action at PJM and a broader Pennsylvania energy strategy that makes sure our supply of electricity keeps pace with demand.”

A dramatically changing reliability picture

PJM plans the regional electric system around a longstanding reliability standard designed to limit potential electricity shortages to approximately one event every 10 years.

The Synapse analyses show how dramatically that risk could change if electricity demand grows faster than available supply.

Under the Reference scenario, which is the most likely scenario based on the current environment, reliability risk in 2030 is nearly six times PJM's planning standard.

Under a more severe scenario combining higher electricity demand with constrained development of new generation, the model projects an expectation of more than 13 potential loss-of-load events per year starting in 2030 – compared with the traditional planning standard of one event every 10 years.

Those results do not predict that customers will experience a specific number of outages. Rather, they illustrate the magnitude of the reliability risk if unprecedented increases in electricity demand significantly outpace the resources available to serve it.

Data centers are a major factor in that equation. In the study's severe scenario, projected new data center demand across PJM between 2029 and 2030 alone exceeds the current annual electricity demand of the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

“Time matters,” Chairman DeFrank said. “The changes highlighted in this report are not decades away. The reliability pressures emerge during the next several years, and the decisions being made now will determine how prepared we are to meet them.”

PUC actions focus on reliability and consumers

The Commission has already taken several steps to address large-load growth and protect existing customers.

In May, the PUC established a model large-load tariff designed to ensure that customers requiring 50 megawatts or more of electricity bear the costs they add to the electric system rather than shifting those costs to other ratepayers.

The Commission is also implementing Act 45 of 2025, which provides an additional layer of accountability for Pennsylvania utility load forecasts submitted to PJM – an increasingly important “double check” as data center proposals drive projections of future electricity demand.

Additionally, the PUC is supporting Gov. Josh Shapiro's recent Executive Order addressing data center development and has taken steps related to PJM's proposed Reliability Backstop Procurement (RBP), including directing Pennsylvania electric distribution companies seeking qualifying RBP offsets to submit information to the Commission for review.

Last week, the Commission also unanimously adopted a motion by Vice Chair Kimberly Barrow addressing PJM's proposed RBP and Interim Resource Adequacy Service. That action reinforced the Commission's position that during electricity shortages, existing customers must be protected ahead of newly connecting large loads such as data centers.

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PUC Warns of Data Center Risks (continued)

Urgent action needed at PJM – and across Pennsylvania

The reliability challenge extends well beyond Pennsylvania. PJM's capacity auctions for both the 2027-28 and 2028-29 delivery years fell short of the regional reliability requirement, prompting new initiatives intended to secure additional resources and better manage large-load growth.

The Commission emphasized that Pennsylvania's larger energy challenge cannot be solved by one agency, one report or one policy initiative.

“The PUC will continue doing everything within our authority to protect consumers and reliability, but this issue is bigger than the Commission,” DeFrank said. “Pennsylvania's energy system is changing dramatically, and our energy policies need to evolve with it. We need policymakers, regulators, utilities, generators, consumer advocates, and other stakeholders working together on a comprehensive approach that encourages economic growth, brings needed energy resources onto the grid, protects existing ratepayers, and preserves reliability.”

Source: PUC Press Release, September 14, 2026.

Utility Executives and Cybersecurity Experts Warn PA Legislators of Growing Threats

In the past year, FirstEnergy Pennsylvania has seen a growing number of attempted malware and cyberattacks around their critical infrastructure.

“Our defensive systems block tens of thousands of automated malicious connection attempts against public facing services each month,” said Brian Harrell, the chief security officer at the company that serves 2.1 million electric customers across 56 counties in Pennsylvania. “These statistics underscore why cybersecurity requires constant attention and continual enhancement.”

He was speaking to a panel of Pennsylvania House members about the increased cybersecurity threats utilities across the state are facing.

In the last few years, criminal and state-sponsored actors have increasingly targeted critical infrastructure across America and Europe. And as utilities and grid infrastructure increasingly rely on internet connections to function, bad actors’ tools have become more sophisticated.

“They’re seeking to manipulate, disrupt or disable the very control systems that provide light, heat and clean water for our communities,” said Rep. Pat Gallagher (D-Philadelphia), chair of the House Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities Committee’s subcommittee on utilities. “Protecting our public utilities requires a unified front, one that bridges private operators, public regulators, state agencies and both political parties.”

Utility executives and cybersecurity experts agreed that, at this point, investments in cybersecurity have become nearly as necessary as spending on infrastructures. But they warned lawmakers they come at a cost to ratepayers, and asked for any new regulations or requirements to take that into account.

“These investments are necessary, but cybersecurity now competes for the same limited resources needed for pipes, pumps and capital improvements,” said Craig Fahnestock, the director of government relations for the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association. “We’re asking for requirements that are achievable.”

Fahnestock’s group represents nearly 700 municipal water authorities. Many are on the smaller side, serving rural communities, and don’t have the money of their counterparts in larger cities.



“All of them are working to address it, but their resources vary considerably,” he said.

While lawmakers were not discussing any particular legislation, Fahnestock asked that any new law implementing cybersecurity requirements include funding, or that the state otherwise help connect smaller authorities with technical experts.

Sumit Nair, the Chief Information Officer for Essential Utilities, the parent company of Aqua Pennsylvania and Peoples Natural Gas, said his company has managed to ward off any

significant cyberattack, in part through funding cybersecurity initiatives.

“We treat cybersecurity spending as a normal, prudent part of running safe and reliable utility operations, the same way we treat the investment in pipes, treatment plants and distribution infrastructure,” he said.

While Nair said the company has not experienced any incidents that have disrupted operations, interrupted service to customers or caused a “material financial impact,” that doesn’t mean increased cybersecurity threats haven’t cost them.

Cybersecurity Threats (*continued*)

The company requires cybersecurity insurance. And the costs can vary depending on a firm's track record.

"The premium rates, a lot of it depends on how solid your practice is," he told lawmakers. "So there's a whole bunch of questions that insurers ask us, and validate us, before they even provide us insurance."

Jeremy Young, president and CEO of Federal Resources Corporation, an organization that provides cybersecurity expertise to government and public sector organizations, warned lawmakers that artificial intelligence has only increased the cybersecurity needs of utilities.

"Attackers now have access to automation and artificial intelligence that can accelerate reconnaissance, phishing, vulnerability, discovery and exploitation," he said. "A utility may have thousands of employees, devices, applications, identities, suppliers, systems, and vulnerabilities to protect. An attacker only needs one successful path."

While he stressed defense against cyberattacks required action, he also warned against legislation that's too prescriptive in a quickly changing environment.

"A security control that worked when it was audited six months ago may not be working today," he said. "That's why I believe cybersecurity needs to become a continuous risk management discipline rather than a periodic compliance exercise."

He encouraged lawmakers and state regulators to focus on regulations that require risk monitoring and taking proactive cybersecurity measures, but that allow utilities to decide what works best for them and their ratepayers, who often foot the bill for new spending requirements.

"I believe we should give utilities flexibility in how they achieve cybersecurity outcomes while requiring evidence that those outcomes are being achieved," he said. "Because ultimately the question for this committee and PA ratepayers should not simply be, 'How much did we spend on cybersecurity?' It should be, 'Are Pennsylvanians safer because of it?'"

Young also noted that better cybersecurity doesn't always require big spending. He said a large majority of cybersecurity incidents can be avoided by educating staff on how to detect and avoid threats, like phishing.

Steve McElwee, the chief security officer at PJM, which operates a massive electric grid across Pennsylvania and 12 other states, also warned lawmakers that changes in power usage from things like data centers have opened electric companies up to greater threats of cyberattacks.

"As electricity demand grows and supply becomes more scarce, the power grid has less flexibility to absorb the impacts of disruptive events," he said. "In addition, the growth of large computational loads has changed the grid operating conditions, creating challenges like over-voltage, over-frequency and oscillating conditions."

Harrell, the Chief Security Officer at FirstEnergy, also asked lawmakers to consider a particular weak point when crafting bills or regulations.

Electric utilities, he said, are subject to federal cybersecurity regulations and increased scrutiny as cyberattacks on critical infrastructure have become more common. But the companies they do business with, who may have data on their systems and customers, are just as vulnerable to attack.

"While we have done a really good job at defending ourselves, it's the third-party supply chain, it's our vendors, that may have your data, our data, and customer data," he said. "We need to be just as sharp with them in ensuring that they are doing what they say they have done."

Source: Ian Karbal, [Pennsylvania Capital Star](#), September 2, 2026.

PJM's Power Shortfall Puts Data Center Growth in Focus

PJM's most recent capacity auction left the grid operator roughly 6.8 GW short of its reliability requirement for the 2028/29 delivery year, adding pressure as it tries to manage explosive demand growth from data centers. In response, PJM has proposed a Reliability Backstop Procurement (RBP), an expedited process to bring in new generation, filed with FERC on July 31 after board approval.

For data center developers, PJM's large-load policy decisions now shape whether projects can even secure power, how much generation they must self-supply, and how predictable their long-term costs will be.



Twelve Proposals, No Decision

This accelerated approach follows PJM's earlier attempt to tackle large-load growth through its stakeholder process, launched in 2025. That effort produced 12 competing proposals — and no consensus. All were voted down, leaving PJM's board to set policy unilaterally using the record from that process.

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PJM Power Shortfall (*continued*)

At a July 23 FERC technical conference on PJM governance, participants sharply disagreed about what went wrong. Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Policy, Jacob Finkel, said he was struck that PJM members seemed satisfied with the process despite it producing nothing — he called it a failure that hadn't moved anything forward. Neil Osnato of Persistence Analytics Group argued the process asked stakeholders with conflicting financial interests to resolve a policy question, and that adding more options just gave people more ways to avoid a real decision. Joseph Bowring, PJM's independent market monitor, said the stakeholder process still has value but suggested it could run more efficiently, noting that participants tended to defend their own narrow interests rather than the broader market.

The 12 proposals covered different pieces of the puzzle — load forecasting, new generation, interconnection, reliability, and how to handle customers who fall outside PJM's normal resource-adequacy framework. PJM's board ultimately drew on ideas from several of them in its January large-load framework, covering forecasting, "bring your own generation" arrangements, faster interconnection, and a reliability backstop.

The Board Sets Direction

Osnato and others argued the stakeholder process still served a purpose — surfacing information and competing viewpoints — even though it couldn't produce a final decision on its own. Abe Silverman of Johns Hopkins made a similar point at the FERC conference: the issue wasn't too many committees, but asking committees to set policy in the first place. He argued PJM's board and the states should set direction first, letting stakeholders handle implementation — which he said would have saved enormous meeting time. Pamela Quinlan of the New Jersey Energy Resilience Bank agreed leadership should come from PJM's board, while cautioning against scrapping the technical stakeholder process altogether.

On the numbers: PJM's July Base Residual Auction procured about 138,318 MW, and total procured capacity came in around 149,182 MW UCAP — about 6,831 MW short of the reliability requirement for 2028/29. The RBP is meant to close that gap, targeted to launch September 30 pending FERC approval. It would secure contracts for up to 15 years, with a maximum weighted-average price of \$555 per MW-day, with any bilateral or self-supplied generation reducing what PJM needs to procure.

Customers Need a Power Path

The shortfall carries real consequences for the companies fueling PJM's demand growth. Google's Brian George told FERC that the company, despite not being a PJM member, has invested billions in the region and needs more regulatory certainty before committing further capital to new power resources — it wants confidence that market rules will hold steady enough to justify the investment. Bowring, however, warned that the RBP effectively shifts the cost of serving data centers onto other customers, calling the approach misguided.

Faster Decisions, Stronger Evidence

Osnato emphasized that the scale of the shortfall — now driving major procurement and infrastructure decisions — makes it critical for PJM to clearly document the assumptions behind its numbers, the evidence supporting them, and which large-load additions are actually solid and executable. He argued speed and rigor aren't opposites, and that before any large-load estimate becomes an infrastructure planning assumption, someone needs to be able to show it's been verified. PJM expects roughly 70 GW of new large load by 2038, making this an increasingly high-stakes question.

Authority or Execution?

Some panelists debated whether PJM needs more regulatory authority at all. Constellation's Mason Emmett argued PJM already has the necessary filing authority under Section 205 and simply needs to use its existing tools rather than launch new processes — comparing PJM to a chef who has what it needs but must actually cook.

Osnato closed by arguing the RBP reinforces rather than undercuts the lesson from the first stakeholder process: policy direction must come before stakeholder implementation, and faster decision-making requires stronger evidence, not weaker. The open question is whether PJM can now move quickly without lowering its evidentiary bar.

Source: Shane Snider, Senior News Writer, [Data Center Knowledge](#), August 26, 2026

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