

The top 10 most significant outages of 2018



Mother Nature spared no section of the country in 2018. The year's biggest blackouts left customers not only in the dark, but often in extreme heat or bone-chilling cold. Below is a glimpse into some of the largest power outages of the year.

Back-to-back nor'easters.

Thousands of East Coast residents spent days — and some more than a week — in the dark after two back-to-back winter storms pummeled the region in early March, causing massive outages. New Jersey was among the hardest hit states, enduring 600 broken poles and 1,700 spans of wire that required replacement. The widespread system damage left utility companies unprepared for the second squall just days later, which struck while tens of thousands of residents remained in the dark from the previous “bomb cyclone.” More than 1 million customers in New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut were left without electricity after the second storm, with full restoration taking just over a week.

Hurricane Michael.

Dubbed a “history-making monster” by a Florida newspaper, the Oct. 10 storm left approximately 2.5 million electricity customers across the Southeast without power. Making landfall as a Category 4 hurricane with winds blasting at over 150 mph, Michael also left behind outages in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. More than 35,000 utility workers from at least 27 states and Canada rallied together to restore power as quickly as possible.

Hurricane Florence.

Some 1.4 million customers across the Carolinas were left without power at one time or another after Flo made landfall in September. Despite arriving as a weakened Category 1 hurricane, she still packed enough wind speed to uproot trees and cause the widespread outages.

Nor'easter number three.

No sooner had electricity been restored to thousands of Massachusetts customers who lost power during a pair of nor'easters that pounded the East Coast a week earlier, than a third powerful storm struck the region, blacking out more than 350,000 homes and businesses.

Severe summer storm.

Tens of thousands of people in northern Lower Michigan had to wait up to four days to have their power restored after destructive storms knocked it out for more than 150,000 customers on August 29.

An icy reception.

Ice and freezing rain on Nov. 15 were blamed for cutting power to nearly 134,000 Ohio customers, the majority in Hamilton County. Duke Energy officials said ice is the worst weather event for their system, causing downed trees, downed wires and other blackout-inducing conditions.

Worse than Superstorm Sandy.

The spring storm that thrashed Connecticut May 15 caused more damage to the electrical system than 2012's Superstorm Sandy. Not only did it destroy more than 1,800 utility poles — compared to 1,700 from Sandy — it also tore down 288 miles of power lines, more than double the amount of Sandy. It took a week for crews to fully restore power to the 120,000 customers left in the dark.

Intentional outages.

More than 60,000 customers in five Northern California counties were impacted on Oct. 14 when Pacific Gas and Electric Co. preemptively shut down electricity in anticipation of gusty winds, extremely dry weather and dangerous fire conditions. While the decision to cut power was unprecedented for the area, the utility said many factors played into the verdict, including a widespread red flag warning, on-the-ground reports from workers and humidity levels below 20 percent.

Tropical Storm Gordon.

At least 30,000 customers were without electricity Sept. 5 after the powerful storm pummeled its way through Alabama, Florida and Mississippi. The largest outage was reported in Mobile, Ala., where almost 21,000 customers were blacked out.

Blizzard.

On Nov. 25, Kansas City was hit by the city's first blizzard since 2011. The snow blitz caused a multitude of blackouts, leaving more than 23,000 customers without power across three separate utility territories