



Control Number: 51812



Item Number: 25

Addendum StartPage: 0

51812

John Ralston

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FILING CLERK

Dear Director of PUTC,

Thank you in advance to you and/or your staff for reading this letter.

I wanted to write this letter to voice my opinion about the recent winter weather nightmare that my wife and I experienced last week. Additionally, I will give my opinion on what needs to be done to prevent it from occurring again.

Our power 1st went out at 1:30 AM Monday morning and came back on again at 2:00AM. About an hour later it went off for 30 minutes and came back on 30 minutes after that. At this time we were thinking that would be the Rolling Blackout (RB) schedule and went to sleep. When we woke up we realized that the blackouts were MUCH longer than 30 minutes. Our house was very cold when we woke up and got colder as the day progressed. We probably had power for 2 hours the rest of Monday.

Tuesday was even worse. We might have had power for 2 hours all day.

With the crazy low temperatures, we were stressed out worrying about our pipes freezing.

All of the above was horrible, but it wasn't the worst part. The worst part was getting text messages from MANY others that never had an outage. My sister lives 5 minutes away and never had an outage to speak of. I know of more people that never had an outage than those that did. All the ones that did have outages suffered LENGTHY outages like us. It really made us mad knowing that we were suffering so much, while others didn't have to suffer at all.

As I'm writing this letter, I know that we were in fact very lucky – I don't think we have any water pipe damage and Carrollton hasn't had any water issues. From what I've seen on TV and heard from others, I feel very fortunate.

That said, I believe that there are some things that need to be done to prevent something like this from ever happening again.

1. ERCOT needs to winterize their equipment.
2. ERCOT needs to get the reserve plants up and running in advance of events like we've just experienced.

25

3. They need to practice RBs at least once or twice a year. This would allow them to see where they have issues and also identify homes and businesses that are not suffering RBs.
4. They need to do a MUCH better job of making sure that everyone suffers RBs when they have them. As I mentioned earlier – the worst part was knowing that MANY others didn't have any RBs while some of us had very lengthy ones. Assuming that many of the ones not affected are due to them being in the same grid as a hospital or an important Gov. building – we need to do a better job of carving out just the important building and not exempting folks that live up to a couple miles away. As part of the review and improvements, ERCOT needs to figure out a way to just provide continuous power to the important building and make all others around it suffer like everyone else. If everyone participates in RBs, no one would suffer unreasonable lengthy ones.
5. Additionally, I believe that the variable rate consumer electric contracts need to be discontinued in Texas. I don't have one, so I'm not biased. I just think that the slight reduction in savings is WAY outweighed by the downside that so many people are seeing now. Either they will have to pay ridiculous amounts or get bailed out – neither are good options.

I understand that all of the suggestions I submitted above will take money to implement, but not doing them will cost much more (and alleviate unnecessary suffering).

Hopefully, real improvements will be made as a result of all of the suffering that has occurred (as opposed to the ones that didn't happen after 2011). As a Texan, I was personally embarrassed about how poorly prepared we were and how bad we looked to the rest of the country and the world. However, I was proud of how we all pitched in to help our neighbors that needed assistance.

Thanks again for taking time to read this letter. I feel better after writing it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Ralston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Ralston".

John Ralston