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On the local news recently, there was a segment about what the PUC is doing to incentivize power producers to add capacity to the grid during periods of high demand, such as during the February 2021 freeze. Like many others, we lost power at our home for a considerable duration during that severe weather event.

We experienced loss of power from the grid during other significant weather events as well, e.g. Hurricane Ike in 2008. The February 2021 freeze was the last straw. We had a natural gas-fueled generator installed at our home that allows us to power the entire house if the grid drops us.

Many other households and businesses have done the same. Collectively, these units represent a significant source of electrical power generation capacity that could be used to power their own needs while removing their demand from the grid. Has the PUC looked at or considered a means of providing an incentive for owners of such units to use their own generator during such periods of high demand relative to system capacity, while disconnecting themselves from the grid to remove their demand from the grid?

There would be no need to modify any of the installed switchgear if such a unit was used to run only the home or business to which it is connected and allow them to operate as their own power island. Two time-stamped photos of the unit's engine hours, before and after, plus information from the home's or business's smart meter should suffice as proof that the unit was used for such purpose and that their demand was in fact taken off if the grid.

Using those units to also export surplus power to the grid, and to automatically be switched on for such purpose, would require some investment in their controls systems. If a unit was of sufficient capacity, however, it could be cost effective and even profitable for the owner to make such modifications if the financial incentive was sufficient. Their smart meter should be able to provide the amount of power that was exported from their unit.

While my home generator uses quite a bit of natural gas to produce electrical power, I will happily pay the incremental gas bill to keep my house powered if the grid drops our neighborhood to manage peak demand. Providing me and other owners of standby generators an incentive to using their generators to decrease grid demand, and possibly adding to system capacity by exporting surplus power, could be a no cost or low cost means of increasing the likelihood that the grid will have sufficient capacity to meet all system demand.

Feel free to contact me if you would like any further input on this concept.

Regards,
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