

WHEN THE GRID IS STRAINED: A Conversation About January 24

On January 24, we shared a Facebook post asking members to voluntarily conserve electricity due to a dangerous strain on the regional power supply. That request was made on behalf of electric cooperatives served by Hoosier Energy and operating within the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) market.

The post generated 179 comments and was shared nearly 600 times. Many members stepped up to help. Others asked thoughtful questions – especially about why residential members were asked to conserve instead of simply shutting down large energy users like data centers or industrial facilities.

That's a fair question.

SEI REMC is a distribution cooperative. We deliver electricity locally, but we do not control which power plants operate or which large customers across the region receive electricity. Our wholesale power supplier, Hoosier Energy, participates in the MISO regional market, which coordinates electricity generation and transmission across 15 states and part of Canada.

Large industrial facilities and data centers are also part of that regional system. Many already participate in interruptible or demand response programs, meaning they can be curtailed under certain conditions. However, those decisions are coordinated at the regional level and are governed by contracts, market rules, and grid reliability standards. It is not as simple as flipping a switch on a single facility.

When MISO determines that the regional supply margin is tight, it may issue emergency alerts calling for broad conservation. The fastest and most effective way to reduce system stress is often through small, temporary reductions across a large number of consumers. When thousands of homes adjust thermostats slightly or delay high-energy activities, the collective impact can be significant – and immediate.

Some also questioned whether this reflects poor planning or overreliance on certain generation types. The regional grid relies on a diverse mix of resources. Extreme weather can impact all forms of generation, and unexpected conditions can tighten supply margins despite long-term planning.

If you would like to play a more active role in protecting reliability year-round, I encourage you to consider participating in one of our load management programs. These voluntary programs help reduce demand during peak periods, strengthen grid stability, and often provide bill credits in return. It's a practical way to support your cooperative while maintaining control and comfort in your home.

Events like January 24 remind us that SEI REMC is part of a much larger, interconnected regional grid system. As your locally governed cooperative, we do not take conservation requests lightly. When we ask, it is to help safeguard reliable service for all members.

Thank you for engaging in the conversation – and for being part of a cooperative that works together when it matters most.

Keith Mathews
CEO, Southeastern Indiana REMC