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Is the US electric grid ready for changes brought on by coronavirus pandemic?

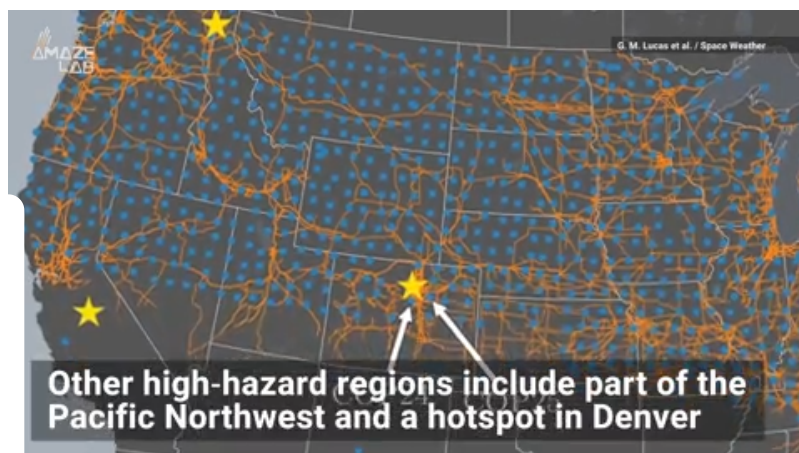
By John Roach, AccuWeather staff writer

Updated Apr. 8, 2020 12:10 PM



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The sun ejects charged particles towards Earth, which can eventually lead to blackouts. The USGS mapped high-hazard regions to help power companies prepare.

Manhattan office buildings are shells of the bustling centers they were just a month ago now that the new coronavirus has led to social distancing and isolation to limit the spread of COVID-19. Whether working at home – or not working because of a job loss – more people in the U.S. are in their residences just as higher temperatures are set to kick in. Is the electric grid ready as Americans collectively reach for their air conditioners?

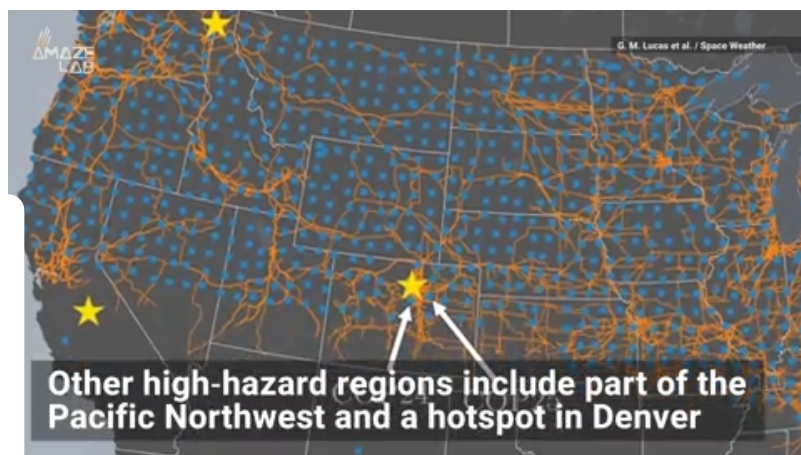
The answer is some combination of yes and we'll see. The fact is, the current situation is a whole new world for energy providers.

"I can't conceive of anything that's comparable in this way," Con Edison spokesperson Michael Clendenin told AccuWeather. "You have major storms ... pass through and you might have outages that last a few days, but this is different. This is a continued thing for a month or more."

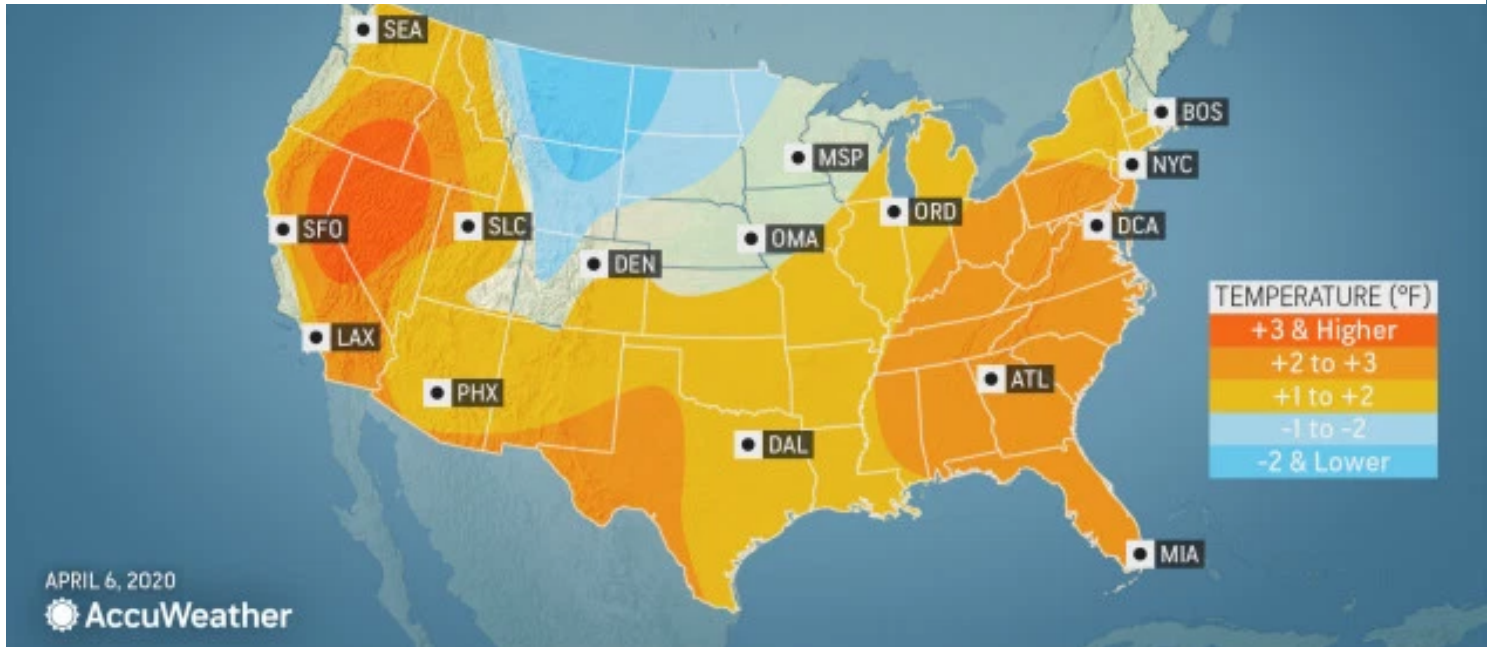
Con Edison supplies power to New York City and Westchester County, a suburb just north of New York City -- a region that includes 10 million customers, according to the company, and is smack in the middle of the outbreak's epicenter. "People are working from home, commercial properties are not in full gear, there's a shift in demand [to private residences] – we'll have to see what it means," Clendenin said.

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AccuWeather is predicting higher-than-normal temperatures almost everywhere – from Orlando to Dallas-Fort Worth and out to Burbank, California – over the next three months, based on the exclusive AccuWeather 90-day forecast, which is [available at AccuWeather.com](https://www.accuweather.com) (search your city to view the monthly outlook).

The higher temperature departures -- the actual temperature compared to the average temperature -- do not mean it will be warm all the time; if that were the case, the numbers would be even higher, according to AccuWeather meteorologists. For example, cooler air will be in place through mid-April from the southern Plains to the Southwest, then turning milder. Longer, cooler spells or periods will hold back overall temperatures in parts of the Northeast, northern Plains and northern and central Rockies.

However, the temperature departures will be increased significantly in the Southeast – Florida, in particular – in April and the West, especially California and Nevada, later in April and May.

Electricity providers told AccuWeather they all a

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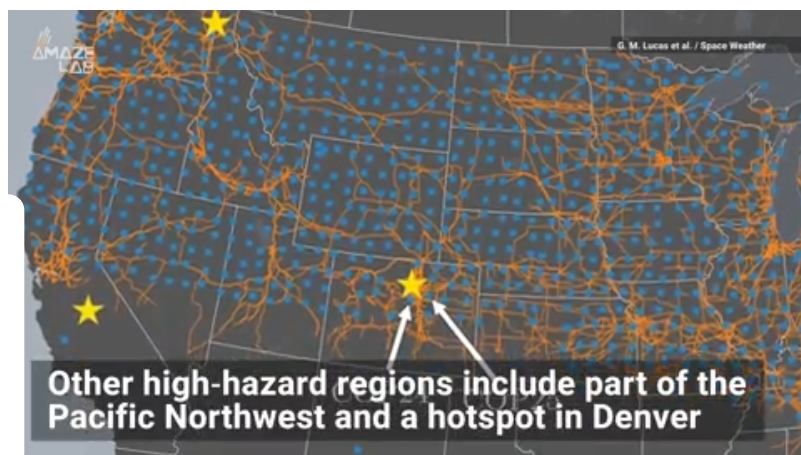
is always prepared," PECO spokesperson Greg Smore told AccuWeather. PECO is Pennsylvania's largest electric and natural gas utility serving more than 1.6 million electric customers. "This includes long-range planning for extreme temperatures we may experience in the summer and winter months. Because of this forecasting and planning, we do not anticipate current weather forecasts to have an impact on our system."

For now, overall electricity usage is largely unchanged, providers tell AccuWeather; the demand, however, has shifted.

"It's important to remember that even though we are seeing greater consumption among residential customers staying at home, especially with warmer temperatures in some of our service areas, we're generally seeing lower usage among many businesses and industry that have temporarily closed or instituted work-from-home practices," Duke Energy spokesperson Neil Nissan told AccuWeather. Duke Energy is one of the largest electric power holding companies in the U.S., providing electricity to 7.7 million customers in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

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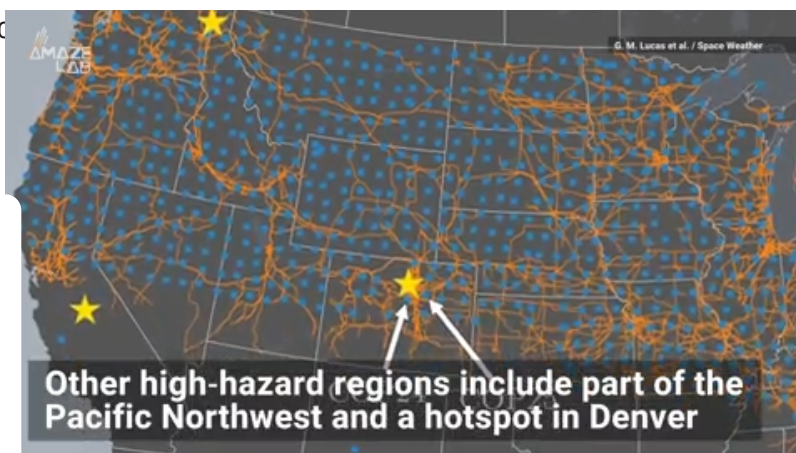
A lone jogger runs on a partially empty 7th Avenue, resulting from citywide restrictions calling for people to stay indoors and maintain social distancing in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, Saturday March 28, 2020, in New York. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

"It's kind of a wash right now," Con Edison's Clendenin said of recent usage in the New York City area. "I've seen reports that put the estimate at 5 to 15 percent higher usage in residential homes, but we are seeing less usage in Manhattan and all of the other boroughs where you have commercial buildings."

One plus for Americans is the substantial drop in the prices of natural gas and crude oil over the last year **could lead to savings on electricity costs**. "Even though it's going to be a hotter summer, there will probably be lower costs where the electricity cost is lower than the cost of natural gas or coal fuel," AccuWeather Founder and CEO Dr. Joel N. Mielke said. "There will be savings in the production of electricity."

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- Wash full loads of laundry in cold water.
- Switch to LED light bulbs to cut lighting costs by 70 percent or more.
- Unplug electronics and turn off lights when not in use.

Keep checking back on [AccuWeather.com](https://www.accuweather.com) and stay tuned to the [AccuWeather Network on DirecTV, Frontier and Verizon Fios](#).

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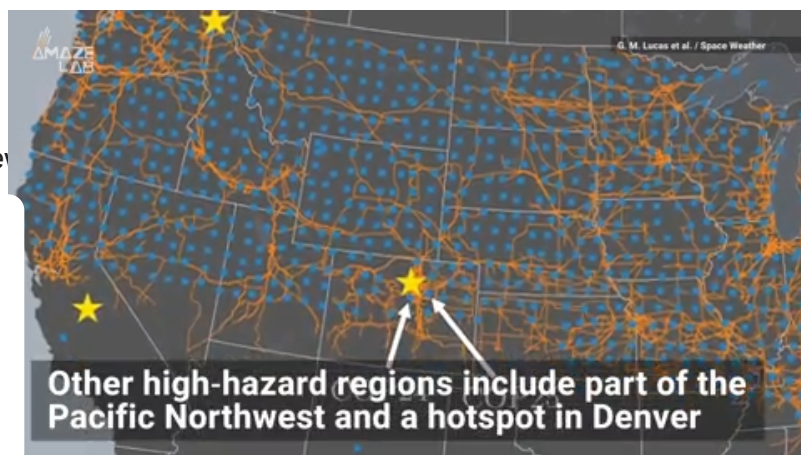
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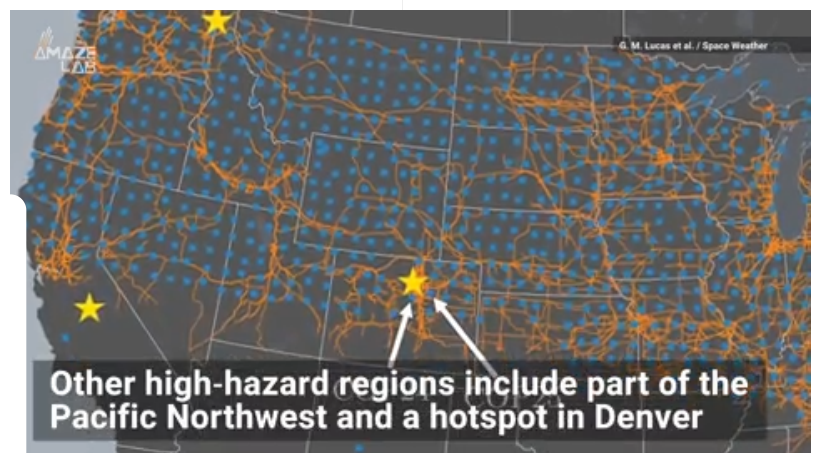
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50 million Americans at risk for next severe weather outbreak

A round of dangerous thunderstorms will end April and usher in May across parts of the U.S. as 2020 continues on a trend to be among the top years for tornadoes.

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'Wet avalanche' leads to daring rescue on California mountainside

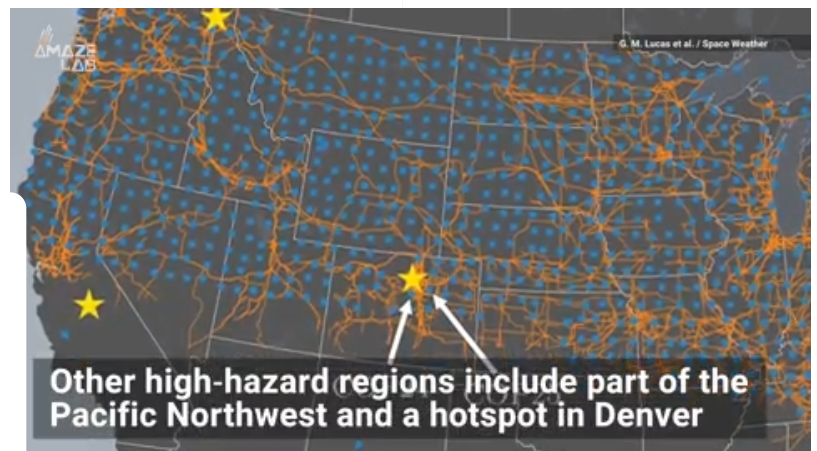
Two hikers who set out for a trek across one of the most daunting trails in Southern California ended up being stuck in a precarious position -- and their rescue was caught on video.

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A springtime winter wonderland blankets New York, New England as calendar nears May

A rare mid-spring snowstorm dealt over a foot of snow to some areas of the Northeast, leaving behind a late-spring, snowy landscape that some residents may only see once a decade, AccuWeather meteorologists say.

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AccuWeather School: Let the air show its muscles and crush a can

While you can't feel the air pressure pushing up against you, AccuWeather School has a fun experiment where you can get the air to flex its muscles and crush a can.

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