

California Faces Extreme Heat, Fresh Pleas to Conserve Power

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(Bloomberg) -- California and neighboring states are facing another heat wave, testing the limits of power supplies and adding to already soaring high wildfire risk amid historic drought.

Temperatures will hit 107 degrees Fahrenheit (42 Celsius) Friday in Sacramento and 112 Saturday, according to the National Weather Service. Excessive heat warnings cover most of California and parts of Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Arizona.

The fresh round of heat comes days after records toppled across Oregon, Washington and British Columbia and authorities attributed hundreds of deaths to extreme weather that's seen as the latest evidence of climate change. California is asking for power and water conservation.

Electricity demand is surging as residents crank up air conditioners, while the hot, dry weather is fueling wildfires -- including the Bootleg Fire in south-central Oregon -- that may threaten power transmission lines. California's main grid operator warned Friday afternoon that all available power supplies would be needed to meet demand, and it asked the state's residents to cut their electricity use from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. to avoid blackouts like those that struck California during a heat wave last August.

It's a request grid officials may need to repeat. The state has pushed hard to switch to solar and wind power while closing older gas-burning plants, but that's left it vulnerable in evenings when solar production fades. California Independent System Operator Chief Executive Officer Elliot

Mainzer said Friday that consumer conservation to avoid outages may be needed for years.

“We recognize these are transitional days and months and years for the California grid,” he said on a conference call with reporters.

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The latest warm weather to bake the West, though, isn’t predicted to last long.

“The heat wave will pretty much peak today through Sunday,” said Lara Pagano, a senior branch forecaster at the U.S. Weather Prediction Center. “By the time we get into Monday and Tuesday things will be improving but they are still going to be toasty.”

Last month was the hottest June on record for the contiguous U.S. with temperatures 4.2 degrees above last century’s average, the National Centers for Environmental Information said in a report Friday. The year’s first half, the third warmest in the 127-year record, also includes eight disasters causing at least \$1 billion in losses from heat, drought, hail, floods, tornadoes and the deep freeze that paralyzed Texas.

Meeting electricity demand is expected to be difficult, with long-range forecasts predicting above-average temperatures through September.

What’s more, the re-opening of offices and other facilities has also been adding to elevated power use. Electricity generation nationwide increased by 5.9% in April from a year earlier as a result of the country returning to normal levels of electricity demand following pandemic-related shutdowns, according to a June 24 report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration that gives the most recent data available.

Read more: California Residents Asked to Conserve Power Amid Extreme Heat

Across Western states, hot weather is raising the risk fires may spark and spread across the parched landscape, quickly growing out of control. Red flag warnings cover Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado through late Friday. Excessive heat warnings, which mean temperatures can soar well

above 100, stretch from near Los Angeles to Nevada, and include parts of Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona.

Las Vegas, Nevada, may reach 116 on Saturday, within a degree of its all-time record, said Pagano. She said nearly 45 daily records may fall across a region home to 22 million people.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has asked businesses, farms and residents to voluntarily cut water use by 15%. Drought emergency declarations cover 50 of the state's 58 counties.

The most populous U.S. state is experiencing the highest combined extreme and exceptional drought coverage in the 21-year history of the U.S. Drought Monitor, with about 85% of its area under such conditions, according to the National Drought Mitigation Center.

(Adds tweet, details of Oregon Fire in the fourth paragraph.)

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