

**For immediate release**

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**Reducing the negative impacts of power outages is the target of new regional plan to help communities bounce back after disruptive storms**

York County, Maine - Helping southern Maine communities and businesses be more resilient to power outages is the goal of a new report by the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC). ***Bright Ideas for A Stormy Future: Southern Maine's Energy Resilience Plan*** focuses on reducing the frequency and economic impacts of power outages, and improving communications in the face of ever-increasing grid disruptions. The plan was an 18-month process funded by U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Disaster Grant to analyze outage data and conduct extensive engagement with utilities, state agencies, large and small businesses, social service organizations, and emergency management staff.

Maine experiences blackouts more frequently than most other places in the United States, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. James Rather, Director of Strategic Initiatives at SMPDC, says "Frequent power outages are detrimental to business, especially for our region's manufacturing and food processing establishments. There is a large cost associated with the loss of perishable products, damage to equipment, and reduced hours."

The plan sets four objectives for the region, focusing on 1) reducing power outage frequency, 2) improving communications during outage recovery, 3) creating more tailored guidance for local energy resilience, and 4) considering grid reliability in regional and state economic development efforts. It builds upon the resilience work being undertaken by the State and the region's utilities through efforts such as the Maine Energy Plan and Central Maine Power's Climate Change Resilience Plan.

"When we started this process, we were really focused on how we could help reduce the number of power outages," says SMPDC Sustainability Division Director, Karina Graeter. "But over and over, we heard from town managers, emergency management directors, businesses, and individuals that helping folks cope during outage events is just as important. A top concern was communications around power outages, and so many of our

strategies aim to strengthen communication channels before, during and after outage events.”

The plan includes a detailed analysis that investigates circuit-to-circuit differences in outage frequency and duration. It shows how the duration of power outages due to inclement weather can vary significantly depending on circuit location. Customers on the longer circuits like the ones that serve southern Maine’s inland communities often experience longer outages than others. These communities may face more complex restoration logistics due to greater physical access challenges—such as heavily wooded terrain or limited road access – and more spread-out circuit infrastructure.

The analysis also highlights how the most impactful power outages are caused by large storms that hit the entire region, such as the Nor’easter of April 2024. Future increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme storm events will make weather-related power outages more likely. SMPDC will work to incorporate this plan’s strategies into future projects and grant opportunities with communities, institutional, and private sector partners. Those proactive efforts to address resilience today are essential to keeping the lights on, despite these new challenges.

Read more and access the plan at <https://smpdc.org/energyresilience>.

### **About Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission**

Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) is a non-partisan nonprofit that cultivates thriving, sustainable communities and strengthens local governments by leading planning and economic development for 39 member towns in Southern Maine. The organization was founded in 1964 to provide technical expertise to municipalities in York, southern Oxford, and Cumberland Counties. SMPDC offers a coordinated effort for land use, smart growth, resource management, environmental sustainability, and transportation planning. For more information, please visit [www.smpdc.org](http://www.smpdc.org)



Utility crews make repairs after a spring 2025 storm in Kennebunk, Maine (Photo Credit: Anna Henderson)