

# Are we headed for another blackout?

**Energy use nearing record high — and it's only June**

BY SERENA WILLOUGHBY  
Staff Writer

Record demands for electricity may cause rolling blackouts this summer, power industry officials warn.

While the province has so far been able to meet demands for power, "We've never had this kind of demand in May," said Terry Young, spokesperson for the Independent Electricity System Operator, the agency responsible for the day-to-day operation of Ontario's electrical system.

This week, maximum use was nearly 25,000 megawatts, dangerously close to the record of 26,160 megawatts set last July.

Since the infamous 2003 blackout, the industry has boosted its energy supply, but that's no guarantee usage during peak load times won't exceed that supply.

Mr. Young said the agency will send out warnings asking people to cut back before it reaches the

point where rolling blackouts are needed.

Last year, 12 warnings were issued through the media and users responded by cutting back on energy consumption.

But the main culprit for energy consumption is air conditioners and the hotter it is outside, the more we crank up the devices.

The average home central air conditioner unit uses about 3.5 kilowatts of energy every hour, costing about \$8 an hour based on last year's rates.

This is compounded by the fact we're all doing it at the same time, between the hours of 4 and 8 p.m. when we return from work, crank up the air and turn on the oven to cook dinner.

And it is during this peak time that rolling blackouts are more likely to occur.

Eric Fagen, spokesperson for Powerstream, the company that manages distribution of most of York Region's power, echoed Mr. Young's warning.

But he is concerned warnings from power industry officials may have a "Chicken Little effect". The industry has warned of impending

blackouts so many times and nothing has ever happened, so we may just stop listening to the warnings.

The more time that passes since the 2003 blackout, the more we forget how fragile the power grid really is, he said.

Since Powerstream is responsible for power transmission, the call for rolling blackouts would come from the IESO Powerstream would implement them.

When that order comes, they have little lead time, Mr. Fagen said.

However Powerstream has a plan that ensures power gets to essential services and no area would lose power for longer than 30 minutes.

Mr. Fagen added the best plan is to avoid the blackouts altogether by decreasing power usage, especially during peak times.

Setting the air conditioning just a few degrees higher makes a huge difference, he said.

For more tips on how to conserve power, visit [powerwise.ca](http://powerwise.ca)

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We want to share:

- ✓ What we have heard so far
- ✓ Our proposed vision, values, strategic directions

We want your ideas on:

- ✓ Improving health in our area
- ✓ Improving access and coordination of services

Please join us at a community roundtable on:

**Tuesday, June 6, 2006**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Vedic Cultural Centre  
4345 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Markham  
West of Kennedy, south of Hwy. 407

**Monday, June 12, 2006**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Vellore Village Community Centre  
1 Villa Royale Avenue, Woodbridge  
At Weston Road, south of Major Mackenzie

**Monday, June 19, 2006**

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Nottawasaga Inn  
6015 Highway 89, Alliston

**Wednesday, June 21, 2006**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
St. John's Rehab Hospital  
285 Cummer Avenue North York  
Between Willowdale and Bayview Avenues

Light refreshments will be served at all sessions.

\*Childcare will be available at this session if requested prior to the meeting.

\*\*American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter will be available at this session.

**Thursday, June 8, 2006**

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.\*  
Northwood Community Centre  
15 Clubhouse Court, North York  
North off Sheppard onto Arleta Avenue,  
west of Keele Street

**Wednesday, June 14, 2006**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.\*\*  
Ray Twinney Community Centre  
100 Eagle Street West, Newmarket  
West of Yonge Street, north of Mulock Drive

**Tuesday, June 20, 2006**

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Georgina Ice Palace  
90 Wexford Drive, Keswick  
Corner of Woodbine and Wexford

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