Investigations Focus in on California's Power Problem

The mid-August heat wave that spurred rolling power outages for 800,000 energy customers in California, has been the focus of an investigation ordered by Governor Newsom. The preliminary report has been completed in partnership between the state’s Public Utilities Commission, Energy Commission and the Independent System Operator. The report argues that there was a “mix” of contributing factors leading to it. For example, California has been increasing its reliance on solar power, and it did not properly plan for needing more supplies to cover the evening hours. Customers were at home with air conditioners running heavily, while at the same time solar production fell. Also, the heat wave was blanketing much of the entire West, so it was difficult to import electricity from other states. In addition, hydroelectric energy was limited due to the dry winter. The report also states that climate change is leading to hotter periods. The rotating blackouts between August 14 and 15 impacted customers for up to an hour. It was the first of its kind event since 2001. They were unrelated to the PG&E planned power outages conducted due to high fire danger. A final report will be released by the end of the year. The three groups note that they are making changes to adjust operations in hopes of avoiding future rolling blackouts.

