

# Lives at stake when power goes out

People with health conditions put at risk by weather disasters

By Nadia Lathan  
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Kimberly Rubit had one priority in mind as Hurricane Beryl ripped through Houston this summer: her severely disabled daughter.

The 65-year-old worked nonstop to prevent Mary, 42, from overheating without air conditioning, water or lights after Beryl knocked out power to their home for 10 days. At least three dozen other people suffered heat-related deaths during the extended outage. "It was miserable," Rubit said. "I'm sick of it."

Electric grids have buckled more frequently and outages have become longer across the U.S. as the warming atmosphere carries more water and stirs up more destructive storms, according to an Associated Press analysis of government data. In the Pacific Northwest last week, a "bomb cyclone" caused roughly half a million outages.

People with disabilities and chronic health conditions are particularly at risk when the power goes out, and many live in homes that lack the weatherizing and backup power needed to better handle high temperatures and cold freezes, or can't pay their electricity bills, said Columbia University sociomedical sciences professor Diana Hernandez, who studies energy instability in U.S. homes.

At any given time, 1 in 3 households in the U.S. is "actively trying to avoid a disconnection or contending with the aftermath of it," Hernandez said.

In Texas, as another winter approaches, people can't shake fears of another blackout like the one during a cold freeze in 2021 that left millions without power for days and killed more than



Senior living center resident Sharon Burks on Sept. 25 recalls the living conditions at the Houston facility after Hurricane Beryl. ANNE MALLIGAN/AP

200 people. Despite efforts to bolster resilience, a winter storm that powerful could still lead to rolling blackouts, according to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which manages most of the state's power grid.

Beryl also knocked out power to millions for days, sickening many in the sweltering July heat. Local and state officials showered criticism on CenterPoint Energy, Houston's power utility, saying it should have communicated more clearly, taken more preventive

measures such as tree trimming before the storm hit and repaired downed power lines more quickly. The utility's response remains under investigation by the Texas attorney general.

CenterPoint says it is focused now on improving resiliency, customer communications and commu-

nity partnerships with the one defining goal: "to build the most resilient coastal grid in the country that can better withstand the extreme weather of the future."

Texas lawmakers, meanwhile, are debating whether assisted living facilities need more regulations. One suggestion: requiring them to have enough emergency generator fuel to power lifesaving equipment and keep indoor temperatures safe during an extended blackout, as Florida did after a scandal over hurricane-related nursing home deaths.

The legislative panel also reviewed emergency responses this month. Regulated facilities and nursing centers far exceed those places such as senior communities that aren't subject to strict oversight,

according to city and state officials. This meant hundreds of apartment complexes catering to older adults, as well as private homes, were likely more susceptible to losing power and going without food.

"We've got to find a way to mark these facilities or get it entered into the computer dispatch systems," said Nim Kidd, chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management. "There are so many places in our own city that we have no idea until the 911 call comes into that facility," he said.

Texas energy companies have been required since 2003 to provide advance notice of scheduled outages to medically vulnerable households that submit a form with physician approval. But the law didn't require the utilities to share these lists with state or local

emergency management agencies. Numerous states have similar regulatory requirements and 38 have policies aimed at preventing disconnections during extreme weather, according to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

In Houston, Rubit and her daughter share one of the roughly 3,000 households where unreliable power can quickly spiral into a life-and-death issue because at least one person requires a medical device powered by electricity, according to public filings from CenterPoint. The utility offers such households payment plans to keep the electricity on when they fall behind on their bills.

The utility's efforts bring little solace to community members at a Houston living center for seniors,

Commons of Grace, where outages have become a haunting fact of life for more than 100 residents, said Belinda Taylor, who runs a nonprofit partnered with the managing company.

"I'm just frustrated that we didn't get the services that we needed," Taylor said. "It's ridiculous that we have had to suffer."

Sharon Burks, who lives at Commons of Grace, said it became unbearable when the power went out. She is 63 and uses a breathing machine for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which causes shortness of breath. She had to resort to her battery-powered breathing pump, which isn't meant to be used for long periods.

"I didn't expect anything from CenterPoint," Burks said. "We've always had to suffer."

### NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX INCREASE FOR THE VILLAGE OF LYNNWOOD.

I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy increase for the Village of Lynnwood for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024 and ending April 30, 2025 will be held on December 10, 2024 at 6:00 pm in the Board Room of Village Hall, 21460 Lincoln Highway, Lynnwood, Illinois, 60411.

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact the Village Clerk, Karen Wingfield-Bond, 21460 Lincoln Highway, Lynnwood, Illinois, 60411, (708) 758-6101.

II. The corporate and special purpose property taxes extended or abated for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2023 and ending April 30, 2024 were \$1,721,684.11. The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024 and ending April 30, 2025 are \$2,190,492.00. This represents a 27.2% increase over the previous year.

III. The property taxes extended for debt service and public building commission leases for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2023 and ending April 30, 2024 were \$378,191.97. The estimated property taxes to be levied for debt service and public building commission leases for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024 and ending April 30, 2025 are \$324,455.00. This represents an 11.6% decrease over the previous year.

IV. The total property taxes extended or abated for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2023 and ending April 30, 2024 were \$2,099,876.08. The estimated total property taxes to be levied for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024 and ending April 30, 2025 are \$2,524,947.00. This represents a 20.2% increase over the previous year.

### NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX INCREASE FOR CRETE MONEE SCHOOL DISTRICT 201U

I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy increase for Crete Monee School District 201U Will County, Illinois for 2024 will be held on December 10, 2024 at 1500 Sangamon Street, Crete, IL 60417 at 6:30pm.

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact Cheryl Hinelein at (708) 367-8300.

II. The corporate and special purpose property taxes extended or abated for 2023 were \$48,265.05.

The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for 2024 are \$73,400,000. This represents a 52.08% increase over the previous year.

III. The property taxes extended for debt services and public building commission leases for 2023 were \$11,997,208.

The estimated property taxes to be levied for debt service and public building commission leases for 2024 are \$11,997,208.

IV. The total property taxes extended or abated for 2023 were \$60,262,260.

The estimated total property taxes to be levied for 2024 are \$85,397,208. This represents a 41.71% increase over the previous year.

### NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY FOR PALOS COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 118

I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy for Palos Community Consolidated School District Number 118 for 2024 will be held on December 10, 2024 at 6:00pm at the Central Administration Building, 8800 W. 119th Street, Palos Park, IL 60464.

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact Justin Veltman, Chief School Business Official, at 8800 W. 119th Street, Palos Park, IL 60464 or at 708-448-4800.

II. The corporate and special purpose property taxes extended or abated for 2023 were \$31,063,971.

The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for 2024 are \$33,253,000. This represents a 7.05% increase over the previous year.

III. The property taxes extended for debt service and public building commission leases for 2023 were \$0.

The estimated property taxes to be levied for debt service and public building commission leases for 2024 are \$0.

IV. The total property taxes extended or abated for 2023 were \$31,063,971.

The estimated total property taxes to be levied for 2024 are \$33,253,000. This represents a 7.05% increase from the previous year.

Notice is hereby given that the Markham Public Library will hold a public hearing on **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2024 AT 5:30 PM** at the Markham Library located at 16540 Kotzer Ave, Markham, IL 60628 for the purpose of hearing written and oral comments from the public concerning the proposed Tax Levy for the year 2024. Citizens or members of the public may attend the meeting and provide oral and/or written comments concerning the proposed tax levy. A copy of the proposed levy is displayed below and is also available on the Markham Public Library website.

	CURRENT LEVY	PROPOSED LEVY	DOLLAR CHANGE	% CHANGE
Bonds and Interest	318,275	-	(318,275)	-100.00%
Library	492,000	725,000	233,000	47.36%
IMRF	35,175	36,000	825	2.35%
Social Security	16,465	17,000	535	3.12%
Auditing	8,000	9,000	1,000	12.50%
Liability Insurance	3,180	5,000	1,820	57.23%
Library Building and Sites	65,000	150,000	85,000	130.77%
Unemployment Ins	5,355	6,000	645	12.04%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>943,920</b>	<b>948,000</b>	<b>4,080</b>	<b>0.43%</b>
Loss and cost (5%)	47,196	47,400	204	0.43%
<b>Grand total Levy</b>	<b>991,116</b>	<b>995,400</b>	<b>4,284</b>	<b>0.43%</b>