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NEWS RELEASE

Alberta sets new high demand for electricity

For immediate release:

CALGARY, Alberta (Dec. 23, 2004) – The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) managed the highest ever provincial power demand without even a flicker yesterday around the supper hour.

“A new Alberta peak demand for power of 9,236 megawatts (MW) was set between 5 and 6 p.m. on Wednesday, December 22,” says Dale McMaster, executive vice-president of Operations and Reliability for the AESO. A megawatt is enough power to light 1,000 light bulbs for 100 hours.

This is typically the time of year when the Alberta electric system sets a new peak demand for power, explains McMaster. “During this time of year we have the least amount of daylight hours so the lighting load is high, and when combined with cold temperatures and the extra demand for power that occurs during the holiday season, the system typically records a new high for electricity usage,” he says. On December 22 temperatures in Alberta ranged from lows of -36 C in Fort McMurray and -26 C in Lethbridge, to highs of -26 C and -6 C respectively.

The last Alberta electric system peak of 9,133 MW was set earlier this month on December 6 between 5 and 6 p.m. The prior system peak of 8,967 MW was set between 5 and 6 p.m. on Jan. 26, 2004, which surpassed the Dec. 15, 2003 peak load of 8,786 MW, which was 216 MW higher than the peak set in 2002.

The AESO is an independent organization accountable for the safe, reliable and economic real-time operation of the province’s interconnected power grid to ensure that electricity is available when and where Albertans need it.

“Our system controllers, direct the operation of Alberta’s electricity grid and competitive wholesale market 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,” says Mr. McMaster. “In close cooperation with industry, the AESO’s system controllers make sure that electricity demand and supply are in constant balance.”

There is adequate power supply, over and above what’s required to meet the needs of Albertans, including peak demand times like yesterday, adds McMaster.

Since the competitive wholesale electricity market began in 1996 about 3,000 megawatts of new generation has been built in Alberta.

The AESO is Canada’s first competitive, customer-focused exchange for electricity. As an independent system operator, the AESO leads the safe, reliable and economic operation and planning of Alberta’s interconnected power system. The AESO also facilitates Alberta’s hourly wholesale electricity market, which has more than 200 participants and about \$4 billion in annual energy transactions, and is accountable for the overall coordination of provincial load settlement.

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