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Texas Deserves a Secure Electric Grid

Twenty-first century technology and today's geo-political environment have significantly elevated the threat of a catastrophic Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP) event. Whether man-made or natural an EMP could dramatically and irreversibly change life as we now know it. Since Texas is the only state with a self-contained electrical grid that is essential isolated from other states, we stand alone in our ability to protect the Texas electrical grid from an EMP.

A highly destructive EMP can occur from either a natural event or a man-made weapon. A natural EMP would be the result of intense solar activity. A man-made EMP could be generated by the detonation of a small nuclear weapon above the earth's atmosphere or a portable non-nuclear electronic weapon. The catastrophic destructive impact on electrical and electronic components would be the same no matter how the pulse was generated.

By its very nature, an EMP would render all unprotected electronic devices within its destructive radius completely inoperative. Automobiles and trucks (post circa 1974) will stop running; stand-by generators will not start; and water pumps will cease to work. There will be no communication – no radio, television, computer, cell phone, or telephone capability. Nothing electrical will operate. The damage from either source would be so extensive that restoration could take six to twelve months. A widespread outage that lasts more than six months has a potential fatality rate of ninety percent.

The EMP threat and its seriousness is not something newly discovered. For decades, Congress and the US military have known about the wide-spread and catastrophic damage an EMP could cause. The military began requiring that most electronic equipment be designed and built to survive an EMP event. The military calls such design specifications "hardening" requirements.

For several years now, scientists have been warning Congress that our civilian infrastructure is also vulnerable to an EMP event and that actions should be taken to "harden" the American electrical grid system from coast to coast. However, once again, the federal government has failed to take the actions necessary to implement what experts say are easy and relatively low-cost fixes to protect the American people from this threat.

More than eleven comprehensive studies by well-known and respected experts have delineated in detail the seriousness of this threat, and, fortunately, the relatively low costs to secure our grid. Unfortunately, for the American people, powerful lobby groups have opposed the necessary federal legislation making it very difficult for Congress to even vote on the issue. Once again, Washington DC has failed to serve the interests of the people. Therefore, Texas must take the lead on this most serious matter.

While this failure of Washington is bad news for our nation, it need not remain bad news for Texas. The Texas electrical grid system is unique. While the other 47 continental states have a shared electrical grid system, the Texas grid is essentially a stand-alone system contained within the borders of Texas. The Texas legislature does not have to wait on Congress, and the Texas power companies do not have to wait on the power companies in other states. In a cooperative effort, the Texas legislature and Texas electrical power companies could immediately begin implementing a program to secure the Texas electrical grid.

The only thing that stands in the way of protecting the Texas electrical grid from a catastrophic man-made or natural EMP event is the will of the legislature and the obstinate nature of the electricity providers. I will continue to work with other legislators and industry representatives to make electrical grid security a reality in Texas.

In our next report, we will discuss the economic attraction a secure Texas electrical grid will be to businesses that are considering relocation to or start-up in Texas.



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