

shows, the amount of electricity generated by wind facilities can quickly and significantly change. NorthWestern, however, must continue to balance at all times the electricity demands of customers with the amount of electricity supplied. This balancing is imperative; deviations between generation and customer demand of relatively tiny percentages for even a small amount of time (seconds to minutes) will lead to system instability, customer equipment damage, and blackouts.

61. During the Winter of 2023-2024, thermal generation, especially Colstrip, played a key role in helping provide reliable and affordable service. The variable cost of operating Colstrip was about \$23/MWh. Unfortunately, NorthWestern's customers were subject to extreme market prices from NorthWestern's market contracts. As an example, market contracts cost our customers up to \$900/MWh. NorthWestern purchased about \$40 million of power during this 6 day critical weather period, which had wind and solar underperforming, even less than their accredited capacity.