

BRIEF

Electric power outages in 2017 doubled in duration: EIA faults large storms

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Dive Brief:

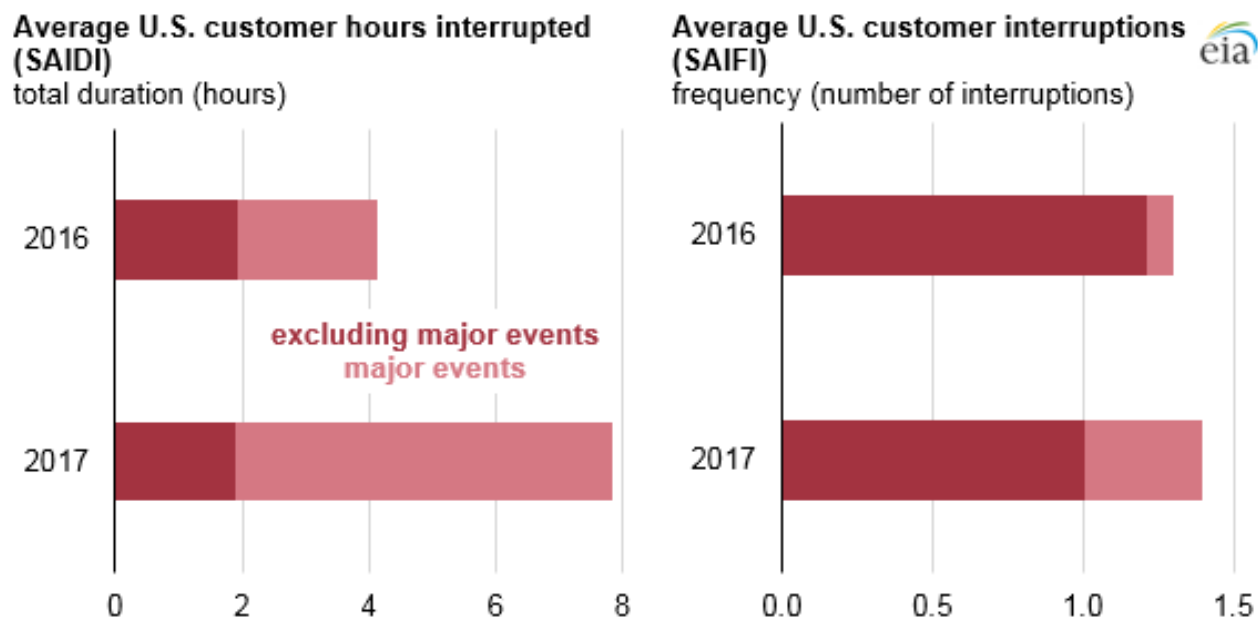
- The average duration of electric power outages almost doubled between 2016 and 2017, according to a new analysis from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), with major storms blamed for the longer interruptions.
- EIA data shows electric customers in the United States experienced power outages of an average of 7.8 hours in 2017, compared with just over 4 hours in 2016. However, when major events are excluded from the calculations, the 2016 and 2017 numbers are much more similar.
- The number of power interruptions experienced increased slightly in 2017, though the numbers paint a different picture when major storms are removed from the data. The overall analysis does not include the massive, extended power outage that struck Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria.

Dive Insight:

The future of grid stability may be more tied to weather and climate than modernization, as EIA data paints a picture of an electric system struggling in the face of growing storms.

For all the modernization efforts rolled out to the electric grid

recently, the length of power outages spiked last year as the United States was hit with several large storms that disrupted the grid for an extended period of time. But absent those storms, grid performance saw some improvements.



Source: Energy Information Administration

Last year, EIA data shows, the average customer experienced 1.4 interruptions, counting major events, and only 1 interruption, excluding major events. Excluding major events, customers in 2016 on average experienced about 1.2 outages.

"More major events such as hurricanes and winter storms occurred in 2017, and the total duration of interruptions caused by major events was longer," EIA said in a note published last week.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, respectively, hit Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico in 2017, though EIA's data does not include Puerto Rico, which was particularly hard-hit. Nearly all of the island's 3.5 million residents lost power in the storm and recovery took almost a year.

The states hardest-hit with outages last year were: Maine, Florida, New Hampshire, Georgia and Vermont, EIA said. Those five states, on average, had the longest total time interrupted. And EIA said that in each state, "the large interruption durations were caused by

major events such as winter storms (in the case of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont) or hurricanes (in the case of Florida and Georgia)."

The average customer interruption time in these five states ranged from 15 hours in Vermont to 42 hours in Maine, according to EIA.

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