

Plenty of power to keep Calif. cool in the heat

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

You can put away the flashlights and candles for now. California is surviving the worst heat wave in 11 years without any major blackouts, and with megawatts to spare.

Billions of dollars in new power plants, and an explosion in solar and wind farms, have made the state's electricity supply network – once a national laughingstock – remarkably robust. Today's market has far more capacity than it did during the energy crisis of 2001. Back then, supply shortages and rampant market manipulation produced three days of rolling blackouts during winter, when electricity demand was well below this week's.

Californians are paying a price for not having to worry about sweltering in the dark. Although their monthly bills are below the U.S. average, the amount Californians pay for each kilowatt hour of electricity is among the highest in the nation. That's partly because of the mega-dollars that utilities have spent since the energy crisis on new plants, sturdier transmission lines and the like.

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