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MANUFACTURING AND TRADE
COMMUNICATIONS AND
TECHNOLOGY
ENVIRONMENT AND
ECONOMY**



Mary Bono Mack
Congress of the United States
45th District, California

September 9, 2011

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Mr. Jon Wellinghoff
Chairman
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

Dear Chairman Wellinghoff:

I write regarding the unprecedented power outage on September 8, 2011 which left nearly 5 million people in Southern California, Arizona and Northern Baja Mexico without power. This causes me great concern, and I am hopeful that you will investigate the causes of this event and take immediate steps to prevent it from happening again.

The federal government has been working extensively on finding ways to best protect our nation's critical infrastructure, an effort that I strongly support. The integrity of our country's power grid, which is what keeps our country running, is something that I take very seriously. Yesterday's power outage was not caused by a grand cyber security plot, but it was triggered by just one single employee performing routine maintenance at a power substation near Yuma, Arizona. This is unacceptable.

As you know, this incident, which fell on a day that was hitting near record-breaking temperatures, left nearly 5 million people without power, closed schools, brought business and traffic to a halt, and shutdown two reactors at the San Onofre nuclear power plant.

For these reasons, I hope you will provide me with a full analysis of this unfortunate event. Specifically I'd like to learn how this could happen, and what safeguards are necessary to prevent similar cascading blackouts in the future.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of protecting the reliability of our country's bulk power system, and I'm hopeful that we can work together to learn from this experience. I look forward to hearing from you. If your staff has any questions about this request, please have them contact Elizabeth Mortenson in my office at (202) 225-5330. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

MARY BONO MACK
Member of Congress