



THE PARTNERSHIP
FOR INCLUSIVE DISASTER STRATEGIES

Disabled Power: A Storm, A Grid, and Embodied Harm in the Age of Disaster

— www.disasterstrategies.org —

Opening Reminders

- This webinar is recorded. An archive of the presentation will be available.
- You will also receive an accessible slide deck of the presentation used today.



Language Access

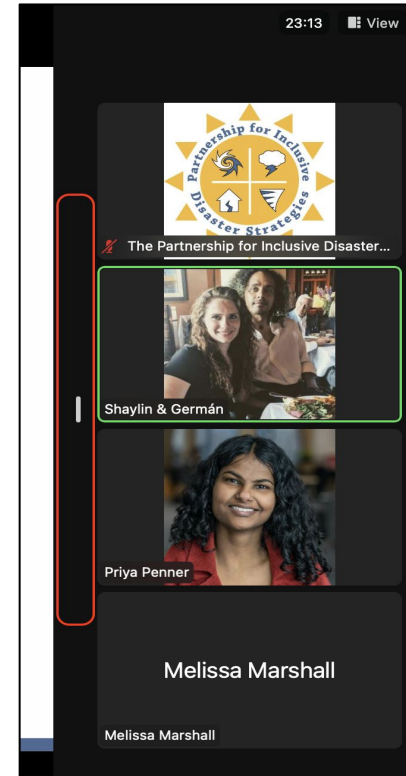


American Sign Language (ASL)
interpretation



CART captioning

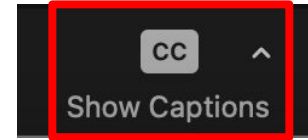
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Language Access

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Disability and Disaster Hub: What We Do



Support Disabled Disaster Survivors and Organizations

- Disability & Disaster Hotline
- Technical assistance and guidance



Strengthen Community Resilience

- Education and awareness
- Convener



Influencing Advocacy, Policy, and Systems Change



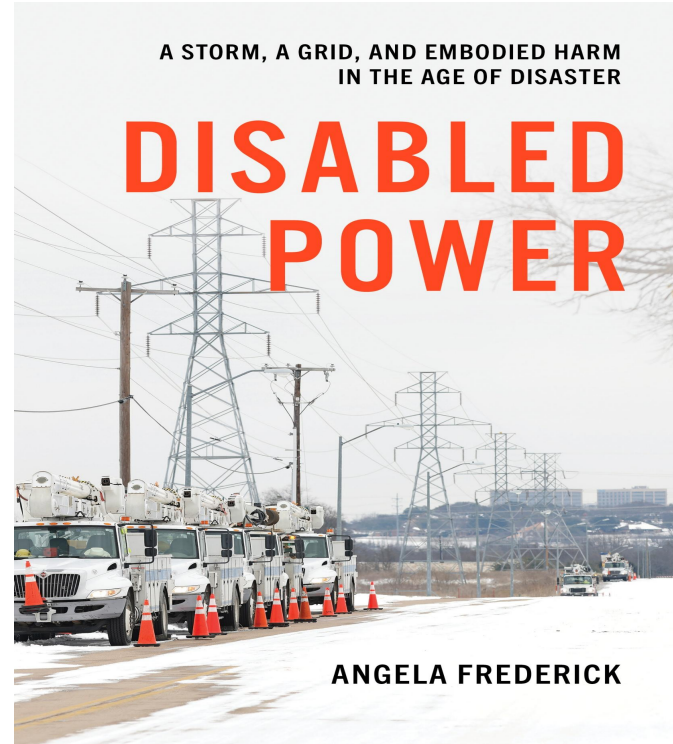
DISABLED INFRASTRUCTURE, DISABILITY RESILIENCE:

**Winter Storm
Uri & the 2021
Texas Power
Crisis**



Winter Storm Uri & the 2021 Texas Power Crisis

- One of the deadliest disasters in modern U.S. history.
- Entirely preventable.
- I wanted to know how disabled people fared, how they survived, how they cared.



Why This Book?

- My vantage point from El Paso.
- 3 arctic fronts (February 10-20, 2021).
- We experienced extreme weather, but not disaster.
- This was a story of politics and policymaking.



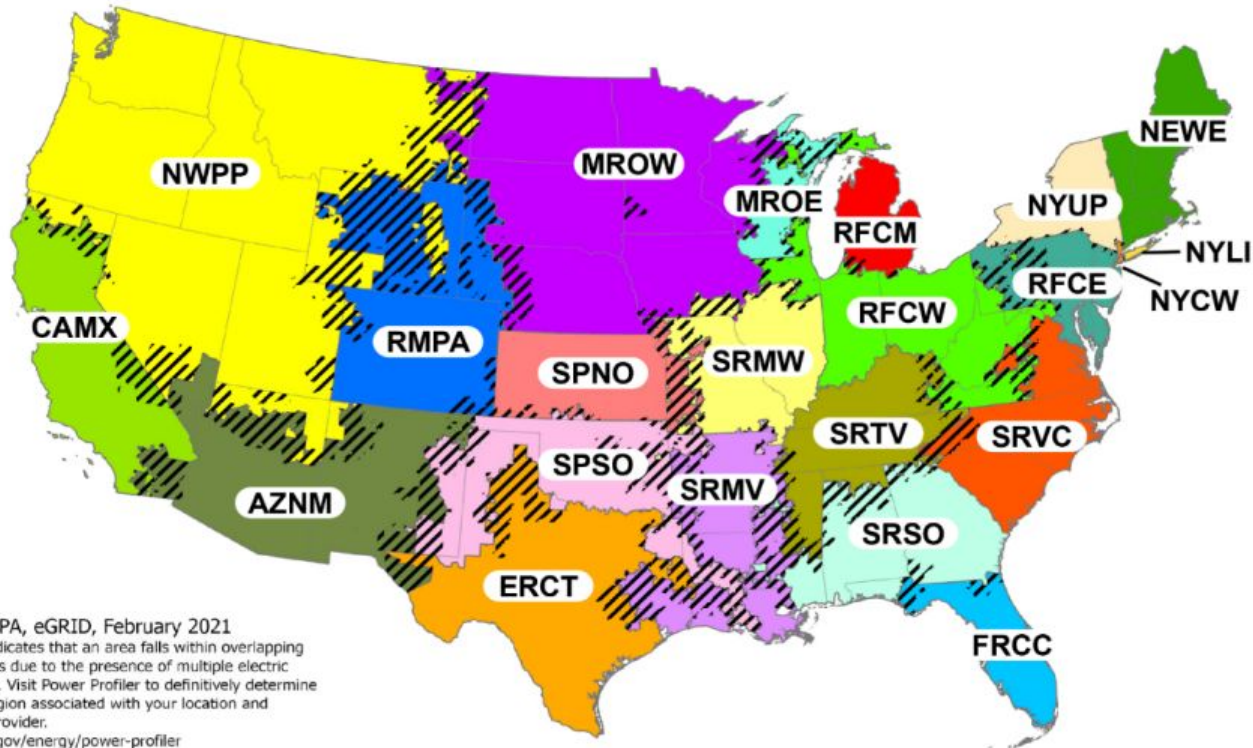
The Texas Power Crisis

- Electricity demand far outpaced supply.
- 4 minutes 37 seconds away from a complete collapse.
- ERCOT ordered rolling blackouts.
- 10 million residents lost power (average of 42 hours).



Map of U.S. Power Grids

Map of eGRID Subregions



USEPA, eGRID, February 2021

Crosshatching indicates that an area falls within overlapping eGRID subregions due to the presence of multiple electric service providers. Visit Power Profiler to definitively determine the eGRID subregion associated with your location and electric service provider.

<http://www.epa.gov/energy/power-profiler>

Deregulation

- Spearheaded by ENRON executives
- System broken into parts. Who is responsible for its success?
- Companies not required to winterize equipment
- Scarcity market
- Market manipulation in natural gas industry

A Cascading Disaster

- Largest carbon dioxide poisoning event in modern U.S. history (1400 hospitalizations).
- Largest water outage event in U.S. history.



Death Tolls

246 – states
official death toll.

814 – excess
mortality rate.



Those with Disabilities

- Connie Richie – 87
- Zeke Mendoza – 61
- Cynthia Pierce – 67
- Carrol Anderson – 75



Disabled Power

- 2 meanings of the phrase “disabled power.”
- What it means for disabled community members when infrastructure fails.
- How disabled people exercised agency and provided care to others.

Sociological Frameworks & Concepts

- How quality of housing mattered.
- Social infrastructure: emergency services
- Social capital
- Administrative burden
- The corrosive community

Marie's Story

- 42-year-old stroke survivor.
- 5 days without power.
- Lost ability to walk.
- "...My leg [was] totally stuck out to the side, like it had a metal rod through it."
- Slept in her bathtub.
- Used a rolling desk chair for mobility.

Will's Story

- 29-year-old with cerebral palsy.
- No movement or feeling in his legs.
- 3 days without power.
- “I was scared I was going to lose my feet. That’s how purple they were.”
- Still assisting other PWD.

Public & Private Forms of Care



Monique's Story

- 57-year-old with physical and mental health disabilities.
- “Man, this is 30 degrees inside of my house. It shouldn't be as cold as the outside.”
- \$1500 bill.

Grace's Story

- 59-year-old with spinal muscular atrophy.
- Got down to her last back-up battery for her ventilator.
- “Well, of course, that's a complete joke. There was no priority for anybody.”
- “And now it expired, so we're not even gonna bother with going through the trouble of getting a doctor signature. I mean, it doesn't matter... What's the point?”

Evacuating on Dangerous Roads



Vernate's Story

- 63-year-old, physical and mental health disabilities.
- Relies on oxygen.
- Family decided to evacuate.
- “Boy, did we slide. I think we slid all the way there.”
- Could not walk by the end of the week.

Emergency Services



- Second line of defense.
- Systems collapsed (911 calls).
- PWD limited by rules and procedures.

Oscar's Story

- 37-year-old blind and diabetic.
- 2 days without power, little food and water.
- Could not get assistance through official channels.
- Walked 4 miles to safety.
- Then had to stand in line for water.

Becky's Story

- 49-year-old with physical disabilities, traumatic brain injury.
- Black mold covered her apartment.
- Section 8 restrictions prohibited her from moving.
- She painted the apartment herself.
- Put her in bed for five weeks.

Sandy's Story

- 64-year-old wheelchair user.
- Wheelchair and air conditioner were damaged by electrical surges.
- APPLICATION DENIED.
- Wrote a letter to the Governor.
- Took a year to get her wheelchair replaced.

CONCLUSION

A canary in the coal mine

Practicing a politics of visibility

Book Discount Code: NYUAU30

STEAR

- State of TX Emergency Assistance Registry.
- Database of disabled residents.
- Must resubmit paperwork annually.

HARRIS COUNTY
PROTECTOR AND SECURER OF THE PEACE
JANUARY 1837
TEXAS

REGISTER WITH STEAR

If you need **EXTRA HELP** during an **EVACUATION** register with...

**State of Texas
Emergency Assistance
Registry**

CALL 211 to REGISTER

Questions?